MY QUEEN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

No. 12.

PRICE, FIVE CENTS.

MARION MARLOWE IN SOCIETY

OR

A RACE FOR A TITLE

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York City.

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Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *238 William St., N. Y. Entered According to Act of Congress in the year 1900, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 12. NEW YORK, December 15, 1900. Price Five Cents.

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By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

MARION'S INTRODUCTION.

"Dear me, Mrs. Stetson! How perfectly delightful of you! And so you have really taken her up and are going to introduce her into society this winter?"

The speaker, Mrs. Augustus Van Twiller, was calling with her friend, Mrs. Wurtemburg, on the acknowledged leader of the Four Hundred, Mrs. Parker Stetson-Stetson, and, as she spoke, both guests turned their eyes expectantly upon their hostess.

Mrs. Stetson-Stetson was a large, portly woman, very red in the face, and just a trifle irritable in temper, but her jewels and handsome gowns far outweighed these small, personal blemishes, and her dinners and other lavish entertainments completely concealed any other shortcomings of which she might have been possessed. It was true that her pedigree was not quite up to the standard, but she was not a stickler for lineage herself, and always chuckled to think how, with her money and jewels, she had swept in from no one knew where on one auspicious day and had completely overshadowed all these blue-blooded relics of patrician families.

"I prefer red blood in my veins," she often said to her intimates; "it's healthier and, furthermore, it doesn't make one feel all the time as if one had just come out of a laundry. Look at Van Twiller," she would add, with a burst of laughter; "she's so thoroughly 'blued' that she reminds one of indigo."

To-day she was thinking very much the same thing as she sat placidly in her spacious parlor, entertaining her callers.

"Yes, I've taken her up," she said, folding her fat hands together; "but you will not have to wait until spring to see her, my

dear, for I intend to introduce her here at the very beginning of the season."

"But do tell us who she is?" began Mrs. Wurtemburg.

Mrs. Van Twiller turned on her sweetly, but with a little snap in her eyes.

"As if that could make any difference, now that dear Mrs. Stetson has taken her up. Of course she is all right, even if she is an actress."

"Oh, yes, she's all right in every particular," said Mrs. Stetson, complacently. "The only trouble is, I'm afraid, she is almost too right for our class. Such a modest, sweet girl, you know! Why, our *decolletés* will shock her terribly."

"What! and she an actress!" cried Mrs. Wurtemburg, with as much excitement as is allowed to strict politeness.

"She's only been an actress for a short time," was their hostess' reply. "Not long enough to get contaminated by the stage, you know; but, even if she had, don't our dear boys love actresses?"

Mrs. Wurtemburg drew herself up with a little shrug of the shoulders.

"Oh, some of our society boys have been foolish, no doubt; but if my Jack, now, should ever dream of marrying an actress, why, both his father and myself would cut him off without a shilling."

"He might go farther and fare worse," said Mrs. Stetson, sweetly. "A girl like Marion, now, would be good enough for any man, for she is a most remarkable girl."

"Is that her name—Marion?" asked Mrs. Van Twiller, quickly. "How delightfully practical it sounds, doesn't it, Mrs. Stetson?"

"Really, it hadn't occurred to me that it did," was Mrs. Stetson's calm answer. "Her name is Marion Marlowe. I call it a very pretty combination."

"And she is very young, you say," spoke up Mrs. Wurtemburg again. She was beginning to worry a little about her Jack already.

"Very," said Mrs. Stetson, tersely; "and a perfect beauty. There's not a girl in our set who can compare with her, in my estimation."

She was safe in saying this, for neither of her callers were blessed with daughters, but each had a son made on the self-same pattern.

They were of the nondescript dude order. They dressed loudly and foolishly, carried their walking sticks in the middle, and talked with an English accent.

Mrs. Stetson despised them, as she despised all sham, but she had the diplomacy to praise them to their adoring mothers.

Society, as it is called, had proven a great pastime for her. She had been a Miss Nobody from Nowhere when she married Parker Stetson, but, with his wealth and her cleverness, she had swooped down upon the charmed circle, and, at the present moment, she could make every member of the elect squirm between her rather commonplace thumb and finger.

Already she had introduced a number of stray sheep in the midst of society, and she was looked upon in two countries as a most wonderful match-maker. Titles and coronets had come under her power. She kept a list of American heiresses up one sleeve all the time, and a corresponding list of impoverished dukes and counts up the other.

Whatever her rivals thought, they rarely expressed themselves aloud. Mrs. Stetson was too rich and too popular—they dared not openly defy her.

"Yes, Marion is beautiful," she went on, glibly, "but you shall see her for yourselves."

"Oh, how sweet of you, Mrs Stetson," murmured Mrs. Van Twiller, angelically.

She was fairly twitching with eagerness to see this young actress.

"We shall be so charmed and so honored," echoed Mrs. Wurtemburg, eagerly.

"So good of you to waive formalities and let us see your *protégée*, dear Mrs. Stetson."

Mrs. Stetson's wide mouth curved a little at the corners, but she turned without a word and tapped a bell at her elbow.

"Ask Miss Marlowe to come to the parlor," she said, as a servant entered.

Mrs. Wurtemburg focussed her lorgnette on the parlor doorway, while Mrs. Van Twiller, who was a little more clever in concealing her true feelings, stifled a yawn behind her handkerchief and then tried to look interested.

Both ladies had called upon Mrs. Stetson for the express purpose of getting a glimpse of the coming *débutante*, but now that she was about to appear before them they tried in vain to appear politely indifferent.

At that moment a shriek echoed along the wide marble hall of the mansion, followed by the sound of feet and the sharp, angry yelps of Mrs. Stetson's Irish setter.

All three ladies sprang to their feet with expressions of terror, and the next second a maid dashed into the parlor, her eyes dilated with fright. Springing forward she sought refuge behind the portly form of her mistress.

Before a word could be uttered a commotion in the hallway held the three ladies spellbound. The next instant a great, reddish brute appeared between the portiéres of the draped doorway, its eyeballs gleaming with an ominous glare.

A young girl, clad all in white, was clinging desperately to the dog's collar.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. STETSON'S PREDICTION.

Mrs. Stetson was a woman who was prompt to act in an emergency, and, as she saw the great brute's glaring eyes, she snatched Mrs. Van Twiller's umbrella almost from that lady's hand and brandished it vigorously as she advanced toward the setter.

"Get Charlotte out of sight, madam, quick!" gasped the young girl, as she still clung to the struggling brute. "Jennie has taken a dislike to her; I don't know why. Hurry and put her in the library and turn the key on her, Mrs. Stetson"

Mrs. Stetson sprang toward the crouching maid servant and seized her by the shoulder. In a second she was locked safely in the library, which adjoined the parlor.

"Now you can go, Jennie, you good old dog," said the young girl, sweetly. "But you must explain your antipathy before you devour poor Charlotte."

Both callers gave screams of horror as they saw the young girl release her hold on the dog's collar.

"Oh, she will not touch you! She was after Charlotte," the girl explained, quickly. "Jennie is a splendid dog; she will not touch any one unless she is justified, or thinks she is justified, in doing so."

The handsome brute had bounded over to the library door as the young girl spoke, and, with her nose to the keyhole, was growling viciously.

Mrs. Stetson spoke to her sharply and quieted her growls; then she came forward quickly to make some introductions.

"Marion, dear," she said, putting her hand on the beautiful girl's round shoulder; "I wish to present you to two of my dearest friends—Mrs. Wurtemburg and Mrs. Van Twiller—Miss Marlowe."

Marion Marlowe bowed with the grace of a queen. She was flushed and panting from her violent exertion, but this did not affect her dignity for an instant.

"I hope you will excuse my somewhat unceremonious entrance," she said, laughing;

"but Jennie gave me no opportunity to regard appearances. She was determined to reach Charlotte, and, of course, I was forced to prevent her, if possible."

"But how could you do it?" murmured Mrs. Wurtemburg, her lips still white with fright. "Dear me! Why, I could not have held her for so much as a minute."

"Not if you saw some one's life in danger?" asked the young girl, quickly. "One never knows what one can do until confronted by such an emergency."

"But I wouldn't have the strength, even if I had the courage," chimed in Mrs. Van Twiller. "You must be blessed with magnificent muscles, my dear Miss Marlowe."

Marion smiled at her sweetly and a mischievous light crept into her lovely, gray eyes.

"It is climbing trees, milking and driving cows and raking hay that has done it, madam," she said, demurely. "You see, I was a country girl up to a few months ago, and I was blessed with the best health that pure air and hard work could give me."

A faint trace of horror showed itself on the faces of the two callers; but Mrs. Stetson's smile was a little wider, if possible, and she made no comment.

"How perfectly lovely," murmured Mrs. Wurtemburg, raising her lorgnette to her eyes and gazing through it at Marion, much as though she were a curiosity.

"Do you think so?" asked Marion, innocently. "Why, I did not like it a bit. When I was at home on the farm I was always sighing for the city, and I fairly loathed the labor that gave me my good uncles. I suppose that is always the way; one is never satisfied."

"But you are to be envied now," chimed in Mrs. Van Twiller, who had at last recovered from the fright the dog had given her. "You are free from the farm and all its environments, and safe under the wing of our dear Mrs. Stetson. Of course, you feel the change, my dear! Few young country girls could ever expect to be so fortunate."

"I trust I am duly grateful," said Marion, softly, as she gave a sly glance at Mrs. Stetson, and then let her lids fall modestly.

Both ladies rose to take their leave now, and Mrs. Stetson's adieus were made with unusual fervor.

"So glad that you came, dear Mrs. Wurtemburg! Delighted to have been at home, my dear Mrs. Van Twiller! I shall return your call at my earliest opportunity; but, meanwhile, I may as well tell you a secret. I am planning a little party for Miss Marlowe, in place of the wearisome coming-out reception. How very wearisome receptions are, Mrs. Van Twiller! Oh, it will be a very select one, I assure you—just to give her a glimpse of our gayety before entering into the full swing of it."

"How sweet of you!"

"And so like you!"

"Soon, I hope, dear Mrs. Stetson! Don't keep us waiting, for, of course, we are simply longing to see more of Miss Marlowe."

"Yes, indeed! She is so candid and so original, you know! Really, you have given us another of your surprises, dear Mrs. Stetson."

The ladies vied with each other in their words of appreciation.

Mrs. Stetson smiled broadly and her eyes twinkled a little.

"Delighted that you are pleased with my plan, ladies," she said, promptly; "and, while I am telling secrets, I may as well divulge another. Lord Curry arrives to-morrow morning; you know, he is to be my guest till Christmas."

For once both of her callers had hard work to control their emotions. Mrs. Stetson had stolen a march on them by this invitation to Lord Curry.

Mrs. Wurtemburg recovered first, but her smile was a little chilly.

"You are a wonderful woman, Mrs. Stetson; really, you are positively clever. So thoughtful of you to provide a congenial fellow guest for Miss Marlowe. Who knows but that it may result in another of your famous matches."

"I can't help feeling sorry for Katie Glenham, though," spoke up Mrs. Van Twiller, sweetly; "the dear girl was so charmed with Lord Curry last season; but, then, she may be able to console herself a little later."

"You mean with the duke," said Mrs. Stetson, abruptly. "Well, she'll meet opposition in that quarter, I fear, for I understand that all our girls are setting their caps for that gentleman."

"Our girls are so ambitious," sighed Mrs. Wurtemburg, sadly. "Really, our own boys are actually left out in the cold. There seems to be no hope for them to make anything but *mésalliances*."

"And several of them are so rich!" groaned Mrs. Van Twiller. "It seems a pity that they do not wed at home; but who can blame them for wanting to become duchesses?"

"Well, I predict lively times this winter," said Mrs. Stetson, calmly. "I fancy that the season will be an unusually interesting one, and perhaps the grand event will be a race for a title."

CHAPTER III

A PAIR OF DUDES.

"Well, what did you think of her?" asked Mrs. Van Twiller, as soon as they were safely in their carriage.

Mrs. Wurtemburg pursed up her lips and shook her head gravely.

"She is very beautiful; but it is quite too bad of Mrs. Stetson! Really, the child is plebeian through and through! Just fancy her holding that monstrous dog, and then think of her admission about the cows and milking!"

"It is dreadful," sighed her companion, "but, yet, we can't help it. If Mrs. Stetson chooses to bring a Hottentot or native Bushman among us, we have to submit; and Lord Curry is coming to-morrow, and the Duke of Lorton only a few weeks later."

"But they will hardly notice this girl, in spite of her beauty and Mrs. Stetson's scheming," began Mrs. Wurtemburg, hopefully· "unless the designing creature carries her fad to the limit of giving her *protégée* a marriage dowry."

"She will have to advertise that fact very soon if she does," was the other lady's answer; "and it will have to be an enormous one to catch the duke or even Lord Curry, for there are half a dozen girls in our set who are worth their millions."

"Well, I am determined that my Jack shall not lose his head over her. Actresses are so tricky and clever, you know; and this girl, in spite of her innocent face, has really been an actress. And she can readily say that she only did it for a fad," continued Mrs. Wurtemburg, sighing. "Dear me, I see nothing ahead but trouble, Mrs. Van Twiller. Marion Marlowe is bound to create a furor with her innocent face, and I am so afraid my Jack will be obstinate in the matter. Of course, I would not care if I was sure about the dowry."

"And if my Augustus pays her any attention I shall send him straight back to college!" cried Mrs. Van Twiller, vigorously; "for I have fully decided that he must marry rich. Miss Rushlyn, for instance, would be just the girl for him. You know poor, dear Gus has very expensive habits."

"So I have been told," said Mrs. Wurtemburg, with just a tinge of maliciousness, "but Miss Rushlyn, now, may have quite an-

other preference. You know, she has shown my Jack quite a great deal of attention lately."

"Indeed! I hadn't observed it," began Mrs. Van Twiller, dryly; then she put up her lorgnette and gazed out of the carriage.

"There they are now, the dear boys!" she announced, almost instantly. "Why, how early they are out; it is hardly three! Such noble fellows! How proud we should be of them!"

She leaned out of the carriage window and beckoned to her son, and, as the coachman saw him, he drove close to the curbstone.

Two young men of about nineteen were walking slowly up the street. They were both dressed in loud patterns of English tweed, and they had on the most pronounced type of Raglan overcoats. Each carried a walking stick with an enormous knob on the end. A cloud of smoke enveloped them, for both were smoking cigarettes as if their lives depended on it.

On catching sight of the ladies in the carriage they doffed their low, narrow-brimmed derbies.

"Ah! Good-mawning, Mrs. Wurtemburg! Charmed to see you, don't you know! Been calling with mother, I fawncy," said Gus Van Twiller, with a careless bow toward his mother.

"Deuced fine day, Mrs. Van Twiller; Gus and I are just out for a stwoll, don't you know! We were just talking of the Pwince's latest fad when we discovered the caw-widge."

"And what is the Prince of Wales' latest fad?" asked Mrs. Van Twiller, trying to look interested. "Really, it is positively wonderful how English you boys are getting. And your accent is so perfect; I just love to hear you!"

"What is the Pwince's latest fad, Gus? Bless me eyes, if I haven't forgotten it, 'pon honor!" said Jack Wurtemburg, turning to his companion, with a foolish grin.

Gus Van Twiller was about to explain, when his mother interrupted him:

"Oh, Jack, what do you think? We've been calling on Mrs. Stetson! And our dear friend introduced us to her new *protégée*, Miss Marion Marlowe. You really ought to see her—such a slip of a girl and such wonderful muscles, and with the very odor of the meadows still clinging about her."

"How dwedful!" ejaculated Gus, with a contortion of his features; "weally, now, that's too bad of Mrs. Stetson! Why didn't she find us something a little more congenial?"

"Oh, but Miss Marlowe is pretty enough," spoke up Mrs. Wurtemburg, quickly; "only, of course, it is a beauty of the plebeian order, not the kind of a face that we could care for, although we must conceal our feelings for Mrs. Stetson's sake. It would never do in the world, you know, to let her see what we really think of her *protégée*; but the girl is so healthy that she is almost a tomboy."

The carriage drove on with the two ladies looking eagerly at each other.

"I thought it best to nip it right in the bud at the very first," said Mrs. Van Twiller, with a little snap. "It would be perfectly dreadful if either of the dear boys should get infatuated with that girl; and actresses are so artful—there's no knowing what she might do to entrap them; for, of course, she wouldn't dream of aspiring to a title."

"We must keep our eyes open," said Mrs. Wurtemburg, with an emphatic nod. "No doubt Mrs. Stetson will give her a handsome dot; but I shall never be satisfied until my boy has married millions."

"Nor I," was the answer, with a good deal of emphasis; "I am determined that my boy shall marry a girl as rich as Miss Rushlyn."

The two ladies separated soon after with a trifling coolness in their manner, but their sons continued their stroll.

As they wandered toward Central Park they were exchanging confidences with each other.

"Aw, but I think Kitty Glenham is fearfully stoopid, don't you know, old chap; and, then, she's so Amewican—not a bit of polish, you know."

"And Miss Rushlyn is so pwoud; I nevah saw such a girl as Miss Rushlyn is," murmured his companion; "why, she actually wefused to dawnce the German with me at the Allyn's the other night—just fawncy, wefused me, don't you know, old fellow."

"By Jawve! old chap! I have an ideah! Let's flirt despewately with this Miss Marlowe, or whatever her name is. It will make Kitty and Miss Rushlyn just wage with jealousy."

"By Jawve! a splendid ideah! And so owiginal, old boy. We'll do it; and, oh, I say, isn't she an actwess or something? Actwesses are awfully jolly; I just love actwesses, 'pon honor!"

"Aw, then that is settled, and it is a gweat secwet between us, don't you know, old chappy. We'll just flirt despewately with the actwess, or whatever she is; and, I say, old fellow, what do you pwedict will be the finish?"

The two dudes had reached the entrance to the park at this question, and, if the fate of two hemispheres had depended upon the answer, they could not have stared at each other more seriously.

"Why, the deah girls will simply be cwazy to mawy us, don't you know," said Gus Von Twiller, solemnly. "They will be fuwious with us for flirting with the actwess, and then, of course, we will mawy them. Oh, it is such a gwand ideah, old fellow!"

"A little wough on the actwess, isn't it, old boy?" said Jack Wurtemburg, puffing his narrow chest out a little; "it's too bad to bweak the poor creatur's heart; but, then, the Pwince would never think of that, would he, old fellow?"

"The Pwince numbers his victims by scores, I fawncy," was Gus Von Twiller's answer. "Deah boy, we must not think of the actwess at all. It is not our fault that we are so attwactive."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARRIVAL OF LORD CURRY.

The episode of the dog amused Mrs. Stetson immensely. Nothing could have pleased her better than Marion's extraordinary entrance into the parlor while her two guests were trying to conceal their eagerness to see her. Jennie was forgiven at once for chasing the maid, who had been indiscreet enough to strike the noble creature.

As soon as peace was restored the girl had been let out, and, by extensive arguments and coaxings, Jennie was induced to forgive her.

After that Mrs. Stetson retired to her room to form a few plans for the coming party, while Marion, with nothing in particular to do, fell, as usual, to reflecting upon her changed condition.

This coming advent of the young actress into society was creating a great stir, but there was no one more excited over it than the fair girl herself.

She was playing an engagement with a theatrical company when, one night, a note from Mrs. Stetson was sent to her dressing-room.

An interview followed and Marion was "taken up," or, in other words, the wealthy society leader had taken a fancy to her and begged Marion to come and visit her as a special favor.

The first visit to the magnificent residence was followed by another and another, and then, as the company was disbanded at the close of its run, Marion accepted the lady's urgent invitation and consented to be her guest for the holidays.

"It won't hurt you to see a little of society," Mrs. Stetson had said. "You are alone in the world with your living to earn and, as I was once in the same position myself, I can sympathize with you, my dear, and I want to help you."

"But, my dear Mrs. Stetson, I am only a country girl," Marion had urged.

"So was I," was the lady's answer; "but I am a society leader now. With plenty of spunk and money all things are possible."

Marion laughed, but the prospect was not without its attraction. She was sure that in society she would learn many valuable lessons.

It was just possible that Marion had another reason, also, for her two best friends, Mr. Ray and Dr. Brookes, were both wealthy young men, who moved in the most exclusive set. She was sure to meet them on their own footing now, whereas before they had always been obliged to come to her level, which was that of a girl fighting her own way alone in a big city. Marion did not for a moment forget that to be a lady and worthy of a man's honor and respect was the highest position which any girl could attain—still, there was a certain satisfaction in belonging to that clique of society which is designated as "exclusive."

Marion had no ambitions whatever in the social line, but she meant to secure what knowledge of the world she could glean and, if possible, improve her manners and appearance by the study of cultured people.

For, of course, one expects to find polish in society. Where wealth and every accessory to refinement dwell, there should be no excuse for uncouthness in speech or manners.

"I must study the ladies closely," Marion said to her hostess, when they met at dinner. "I must learn perfect repose of manner and gentleness of speech, for I know I am impulsive and brusque and too given to speaking my mind—faults that no doubt are due to my humble country origin."

Mrs. Stetson glanced at her to see if she were serious; then a broad smile stole over her florid features.

"There are several ladies in our class who answer to your description," she said, thoughtfully; "and, of course, I shall take pleasure in pointing them out, but you take my advice and act naturally, Marion, and if you do shock some one occasionally by your fearless speech, it wont hurt them, my dear, and it may be beneficial."

"As if anything I could say would be of benefit to these grand ladies," was the young girl's answer: "but I am almost afraid I shall have to act naturally. The gift of dissembling has been denied me, Mrs. Stetson."

"A little of it is a good thing, but you can cultivate all you need, Marion," was the lady's answer. "'Be all things to all men,' if you wish to succeed, but always be true to yourself, no matter what you are to others."

"The last will not be difficult," said the beautiful girl, seriously. "I doubt if I could deceive myself if I tried, Mrs. Stetson. I am painfully aware of my own deficiencies and shortcomings."

"Well, don't admit them to any one but yourself, my dear," said the lady again. "Remember our graces were given us for public wear, while our faults are to be hidden in the seclusion of our own chamber."

Marion pondered over her words with a great deal of earnestness. Mrs. Stetson's philosophy had been gained through long

experience, and Marion was not the girl to spurn the advice of her elders.

When the European steamer came in the next day it brought Lord Curry.

Mrs. Stetson's carriage was at the wharf and he arrived at her mansion in time for luncheon.

When his hostess presented the young English nobleman to Marion Marlowe he almost lost his self-possession for the space of a second.

He had come back to this country thinking fondly of Maude Rushlyn, a dashing young blonde, with a bank account that ran up into the millions; but with his first glance into Marion Marlowe's gray eyes, the face of Miss Rushlyn seemed to fade from his memory.

The fact that he was a lord did not seem to weigh heavily with Marion, and she promptly extended her hand to him in the most simple, cordial manner.

"I am so glad you are young," were almost her first words. "Mrs. Stetson did not describe you to me a bit, and I was dreadfully afraid you were going to be a gouty old fellow. Somehow, I always think of English lords as men with stern faces and no end of dignity in their bearing. I suppose I have gotten that idea from the newspaper accounts of great men in your Parliament such as Lord Salisbury, for instance."

"Thank fortune I am not like him," said Lord Curry, laughing; "why, I'm just a poor devil of a fellow without an ounce of dignity, don't you know. I'd rather flirt with a pretty girl than eat a state dinner, and I'm vastly more at home in the saddle than in a fine lady's drawing-room."

"Then we'll get on famously," laughed Marion, merrily; "and, if you are a sample of all society men, I'm glad I have been permitted to enter its precincts."

Lord Curry shrugged his shoulders, but he looked at her admiringly.

"Society is a bore," he said, with charming candor, but a sigh followed his remark, and his next words were tinged with bitterness.

"One's family and friends expect so much of one, Miss Marlowe. Why, if I had my way, I'd have been married years ago to some simple little peasant girl who would always adore me, and I'd be reveling to-day in absolute freedom in the country instead of——"

He paused abruptly, for Mrs. Stetson had entered.

"Instead of coming across the sea to capture an heiress, Lord Curry," finished his hostess. "Don't be afraid to speak truthfully; Marion appreciates honesty."

"I am glad if she does," murmured the Englishman, bitterly. "Sometimes I almost loathe myself for even desiring to be honest."

"Oh, you can't mean that!" cried Marion.

Lord Curry looked at her and caught the fearless, noble spirit in her eyes.

"No, I did not mean that," he said, with a shamed laugh; "yet, sometimes, I think that sham and dishonesty are necessary evils, and that honor is stock that is no longer staple—then—then I look into eyes like yours, Miss Marlowe, and I am ashamed of myself for harboring such sentiments, and I tug again at the shackles of society, but it is always with the same result—I am hopelessly entangled."

A heavy sigh followed this extraordinary remark, and Marion Marlowe's eyes filled with tears as she heard it. She seemed instantly to understand this young man's dilemma. It was family pride—one of the greatest curses upon humanity—that was goading him on in this effort to win an heiress.

Every noble sentiment in her nature revolted against this condition, yet she could

appreciate his dilemma—and sympathize with him, too—for such an act as he had referred to—that of making a *mésalliance*—would have been as fatal to his career as insanity or suicide.

Before she could speak a maid tapped on the door. She had two visiting cards upon a silver salver.

"Maude Rushlyn and her mother," announced Mrs. Stetson, dryly. "Well, I must confess that they are starting in promptly."

CHAPTER V

A DAZZLING TEMPTATION.

"I disappointed them that time," was Mrs. Stetson's remark, when she came back to the room where she had left Lord Curry and Marion. "They inquired after you in a way that should have made your ears tingle, Lord Curry; and as for you, Marion, they are both just dying to see you."

"And I should be so glad to see Miss Rushlyn," said Marion, quickly; "a girl with millions in her own right should be a very attractive person!"

"Why?" asked Lord Curry, with some impatience in his manner.

"Because there is no excuse for her not being attractive," said Marion, promptly. "She has had the money to cultivate every talent that she possesses. Very different from a poor girl who has to work for her living! Why, if I had money," she went on, "do you know what I would do? I would spend every hour in the day in travel or study. I should learn, learn, learn, just as long as my brain would let me, and I would develop every grace that nature has given me! Oh, it must be beautiful to be able to do this, to say nothing of the good one could do to his fellow-mortals if one had money!"

Lord Curry looked at her gravely, but did not speak. No girl of his acquaintance had ever before suggested such a use of money.

"How about dresses and bonnets?" asked Mrs. Stetson, slyly; "you have forgotten what most girls would think were the most important items."

"Oh, I'd have those, too, of course," said Marion, carelessly; "they would come under the head of cultivation of graces."

Lord Curry laughed. She interested him greatly. When he finally went to his chamber her face seemed constantly before him.

Mrs. Stetson's invitations for the party were sent out the next day, and Marion was greatly interested and excited as she watched the preparations.

The magnificently furnished mansion was thrown wide open and the decorations of the rooms were on an extravagant scale.

"Only a small party of the elect, my dear," Mrs. Stetson said, laughingly: "I am going to be very exclusive with you, child; it is one of the 'tricks of the trade,' as you will see before the season is over."

Marion's eyes dilated with genuine curiosity.

"My dear Mrs. Stetson, what do you mean?" she asked, eagerly.

"Listen," was the answer, as Mrs. Stetson folded her fat hands upon her lap, while Marion knelt on a footstool and gazed up at her earnestly.

"This winter is to be a lively one, if I can prophecy correctly. Lord Curry is here, and the Duke of Lorton is coming, and, besides, we have a score of boys of our own who are really eligible. Now, on the other hand, there are a dozen girls who are rich and pretty, title hunters the most of them; but that is not wholly their fault. Most of them are put up to it by their ambitious mammas. If you are anxious for some fun you can readily have it, Marion; it is only a matter of a little shrewdness, and an exclusive start is the beginning of that shrewdness."

"I see," said the young girl, with a mischievous light in her eyes. "The girls are not really in love, so the field is fair and I am to have an 'inning'!"

"You have it already," said Mrs. Stetson, laughing; "why, Lord Curry was vanquished at the first glimpse of your face! I have only to mention your 'dot,' and he'll propose instanter."

"Mercy! Don't ever do that!" cried the girl, blushing furiously; "why, it would be perfectly awful to be made love to under those circumstances!"

"Those are the conditions under which most society girls become engaged," said Mrs. Stetson, grimly. "What can our boys

know of love when they have had 'money,' 'money,' 'money' dinned into their ears ever since their babyhood? And what do our girls care for affection when they can capture a title?"

"Oh, but there must be many exceptions! It would be awful if there were not!" said Marion, soberly; "and, as for Lord Curry, he does not seem like that at all. I am sure he is capable of loving very deeply."

"Found that out so quick, have you?" laughed Mrs. Stetson. "Well, mark my words, child, his heart will never guide him! 'What is bred in the bone must come out in the flesh,' and Lord Curry's ancestors were a greedy lot of fellows."

Marion sighed as a vision of the young Englishman appeared before her. He was a handsome fellow, and one who could be very attractive, if it pleased him to be so.

"Then his better nature is stunted," she said, very decidedly; "I am sure he is noble and true at heart! It must be the shadow of those wretched ancestors that he cannot get away from."

"The shadow is relentless, then," said Mrs. Stetson, smiling; "for I have known Lord Curry for several years, and he has always been the same; no amount of money was so alluring that a larger amount did not tempt him from his previous allegiance."

"Then I despise him," said Marion, her lip curling a little. "He does not know what love is, if he is so shallow and sordid!"

"Few men know what love is," was her hostess' answer; "although there is no other word which they make so free with and no other sentiment which they insult so frequently."

Marion looked at her sharply. There were lines of sadness about her mouth. It was evident that she spoke from some bitter experience.

"Is the Duke so unprincipled, also?" she asked, hoping to change the subject.

To her great surprise, Mrs. Stetson burst out laughing.

"Fancy questioning the principles of a Duke!" she said, gayly; "but wait until you see him, girlie, and judge for yourself, but, remember, I wish you to tell me as soon as possible if you wish to be a Duchess!"

The young girl stared in astonishment now, for, in spite of her laughter, Mrs. Stetson was serious.

"As if I could ever win a great man like that," she said, slowly; "a real nobleman—why, the thing is preposterous!"

"Why not you as well as any one else?" asked her hostess, still laughing; "and think, Marion, what a monstrous joke it would be to see a little country girl entered in the race and at the end of the season run away with the title!"

The lady fairly shook with laughter, as the picture presented itself, but for once the young girl was too serious to join her.

"A joke, indeed," she said, rather grimly; "and one that would be turned upon me with a vengeance! No, I think I will not venture in the path of the Duke. I am of far too humble origin to aspire to a title."

"Nonsense! What difference can that make?" cried Mrs. Stetson, growing serious. "I tell you, Marion, it will be a capital scheme! I'm thoroughly in earnest, and you must look at it sensibly! You have the beauty and I have the wealth. There is no reason on earth why you shouldn't be a Duchess!"

She rose from her chair and went over and closed the door. She had no idea of letting the servants overhear the scheme that she had been hatching.

When she came back to her chair she drew it a little nearer to Marion and her voice sank to a whisper as she began talking rapidly.

A half an hour later the young girl went slowly from her presence.

Such a picture of regal splendor had never been presented to her before: such a vision of future magnificence had never dazzled her brain,—not even in the wildest flights of her youthful imagination.

The title of "Duchess" was dangling within her reach, and between her and it were only a half dozen young women with bags of gold to counterbalance her beauty and, in one or two cases, a flawless lineage, which was supposed to weigh but lightly in the balance.

Marion's heart beat faster in spite of her calmness. It was a temptation to try for

such a prize. No country girl living could help considering it.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. STETSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

The day before the party Marion and Mrs. Stetson were together, taking a last careful look at the young girl's costume for the evening. Marion's eyes had dilated when she first saw the beautiful white satin dress which her hostess had insisted upon ordering for her.

"You will look like an angel in that, Marion," said Mrs. Stetson, as she examined the costly garment critically; "and won't your modest little 'V' neck cause a sensation among our guests! They'll think you are a prude of the very first water."

"Well, I shall not say what I think of them," said Marion, laughing; "but, if it is considered proper to show one's shoulders, I'll be improper for some time, I fancy."

Mrs. Stetson laughed, and just then a maid handed in some letters.

"Mr. Ray will not come to-morrow night," she said, quietly, as she glanced over one of them; "he is in mourning, poor fellow, and is not going out at all."

Marion bit her lips to keep from speaking. This was a disappointment to her, for she had hoped to see her old friend.

"And, dear me, this is too bad," went on Mrs. Stetson; "Regie Brookes, one of the most charming young men that I know, has disappointed me. He is a practicing physician and will be too busy to come,—some patient is so ill that he refuses to leave her."

Again Marion felt a pang of disappointment, for she had depended on her old friends to help her feel at home in her new experience, but now it looked as if she were doomed to an evening with total strangers.

"Oh, by the way, dear," said Mrs. Stetson, as if she had just happened suddenly to think of something:

"There's a young man in town who belongs in our set,—the adopted son of one of my old friends. I have half a notion to send him an invitation, not because I want him especially, but just to please his father."

"Who is he?" asked Marion, indifferently, as she examined a beautiful fan that Mrs. Stetson had given her.

"Albert Canfield Jackson, I believe, is his name," was Mrs. Stetson's prompt answer. "He was a poor orphan boy when Dunlap Canfield adopted him."

Marion Marlowe nearly dropped the fan which she held in her hand, but Mrs. Stetson's back was toward her and that lady did not notice her confusion.

"He's rather young," she went on; "but that doesn't matter,—I am told that he looks nearer twenty than eighteen, and he has just been abroad, so I fancy he will be entertaining."

"I fancy he will," murmured Marion, in a strange voice; then she put her handkerchief to her face to conceal how her lips were twitching.

"No doubt he will be conceited and all that sort of thing," continued Mrs. Stetson, calmly; "boys of that age usually are, but if he is, he will do splendidly for Ada Farnham to flirt with, and I hadn't succeeded in pairing off that young lady."

"Do you always do that?" asked Marion, curiously; "if you do, why not turn Bert over to my tender mercies?"

Mrs. Stetson wheeled around and confronted her with a stare.

"As if I would allow you to take second place," she said, quickly; "Lord Curry will probably look after you, Marion, but how does it happen that you speak so familiarly of young Canfield Jackson?"

Marion bit her lips and then burst out laughing.

"Bert Jackson and I have been friends for years," she said, honestly. "Why, we came from the same place up in Connecticut,—Hickorytown."

"You don't say so!"

This was all that Mrs. Stetson could say, so Marion hastened to tell her the whole story.

"It will seem too funny for anything to meet Bert here," she finished, laughingly; "but everything seems funny nowadays, Mrs. Stetson."

"Listen to me, Marion," said her hostess, firmly. "You must not show that you know this young Jackson. It will help me greatly

if you will do this, Marion, and, besides, it will give the two of you more fun than a little this winter. Do promise me that you will appear not to know him."

"I'll promise, if Bert will," was the young girl's answer; "I'm sure you are only doing it for mischief, Mrs. Stetson, and, as you say, Bert and I will have fun playing strangers."

"Sit down and write to him now," said Mrs. Stetson, quickly: "and I will have the letter mailed at the same time as the invitation."

Marion wrote her letter and then went down to the library, where she found Lord Curry looking over the papers.

"So the Duke has arrived," he remarked, as she entered. "Landed this morning and went straight to the Waldorf."

"I wonder if Mrs. Stetson knows it," exclaimed Marion, quickly.

"She must," was the answer, as Lord Curry handed her the paper. "This says that his first appearance on this side will be at the residence of Mrs. Parker Stetson-Stetson, at a party given in honor of Miss Marion Marlowe."

Marion glanced at the newspaper, while a flush overspread her cheeks.

"Mrs. Stetson is so sly—why, she has never even whispered to me that the Duke was coming," she said, laughing. "Have you met him, Lord Curry? Do tell me about him!"

A ghost of a smile flitted over the young Englishman's lips.

"I believe that his title is genuine," he said, a trifle sarcastically; "and there is a castle somewhere that is his by right. Isn't that as much as you wish to know, Miss Marlowe?"

Marion looked at him quickly and caught the gleam of mischief in his eyes.

"Yes, indeed," she replied, promptly; "that will do very nicely. American girls are known to be title-hunters; of course, I cannot expect to be considered an exception."

"But you are an exception, aren't you, Miss Marlowe?" asked the young Lord, eagerly.

He had come close to her side and was gazing down at her with a look in his eyes that almost startled her.

Marion shrugged her shoulders involuntarily before she answered. It seemed such a stupid question to her.

"I have a proper respect for nobility, if it is genuine," she said, in her musical voice; "but nobility of the kind I mean is independent of titles,—of course, if the two go together so much the better."

"But you would not marry a man for his title alone?" asked Lord Curry, in a concentrated tone.

Marion glanced at him quickly and then burst out laughing.

"Oh, a title is terribly tempting!" she said, mischievously. "Just fancy how it would seem to a poor girl to become a Duchess!"

Lord Curry bit his lips and a heavy frown crossed his brow. He was a too thoroughly dull-witted Englishman to understand her banter.

"All alike," was the thought that flashed through his mind; then with a hurried bow he left the room, and a moment later Mrs. Stetson entered.

"Oh, Mrs. Stetson! The Duke is here!" cried Marion, completely forgetting Lord Curry for the moment.

"I know it, dear," answered her hostess, calmly; "and the fun began the minute he landed. There were six invitations awaiting him to be the guest of six various families of the *élite*, and yet his Grace steered straight for the Waldorf."

"How do you account for that?" asked Marion, curiously.

Mrs. Stetson smiled serenely as she made a rapid explanation.

"To have accepted one invitation would have been to refuse the other five. The Duke is politic,—he cannot afford to show a preference,—at least not until he knows which of our heiresses is to be the future Duchess."

"And that depends on the 'dot,' as you call it, I suppose?" inquired Marion, coldly.

"The Duke needs money and a great deal of it," was Mrs. Stetson's answer; "but I don't intend that you shall be left out in the cold, Marion, and for that reason, when the society reporter of the *Star* called yesterday, I had her insert this paragraph."

As she finished she picked up a paper that was lying on the table, and, turning to the

society notes, pointed out a paragraph to Marion.

As the young girl glanced it over her eyes dilated with wonder, but, as she reached the end, she burst out laughing.

"Mrs. Parker Stetson-Stetson's Latest," was the heading. "The well-known society leader, Mrs. Parker Stetson-Stetson, is about to introduce a new *protégée* into the innermost circles. The young lady is a Miss Marion Marlowe, an actress, and a great beauty. Mrs. Stetson declares that she will settle a cool million on her young charge if, at the end of the season, she has married with her approval. This brings one more beautiful heiress into the social field and promises a season of more than the usual amount of social rivalry."

"How I would have liked to have seen Miss Allyn's face when she was writing that," she burst out, impulsively. "Miss Allyn is the society reporter for the *Star* and my dearest friend. Oh, Mrs. Stetson, you have no idea how strange all this seems to me!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRESENTATION PARTY.

Mrs. Stetson had spoken of her party as "a small affair," but, as Marion saw the guests arriving she became more and more astonished. They came so thick and fast that she had hardly time to breathe, and by eleven o'clock she had been presented to fully two hundred.

It was a trying ordeal for her to be introduced to so many strangers, but the young girl soon learned that the same smile and the same words of greeting would do for them all, so, by the time it was all over, she was feeling very natural and easy.

"So charmed to meet you again," Mrs. Van Twiller had said, as she came smilingly up to Marion; then the young girl received her first shock of the evening, for, by the side of his mother was Augustus Van Twiller.

She bit her lips as she acknowledged the introduction, but, for a moment it seemed to her that he must be acting a part, for such a fop she had never seen in the whole course of her existence.

"Aw, chawmed to meet you, don't you know," simpered the loudly-dressed dude, foolishly; "such a tweat! I shall give you the very first dawnce, Miss Marlowe."

"How kind of you," murmured Marion, feeling as though she must laugh or die; then Miss Rushlyn was presented and she was enabled to control her feelings.

As Marion heard this name she looked up a little curiously. Miss Rushlyn was, perhaps, the richest girl in the charmed circle and the one whom the Duke was supposed to be after.

As the two girls bowed and smiled they stared frankly at each other, but, as yet, there was not a suspicion of jealousy in their glances.

"Miss Marlowe, I am delighted," Miss Rushlyn said, promptly; "we shall be friends, I am sure, and see each other often."

Marion thanked her warmly; she rather liked Miss Rushlyn. She seemed as cold as marble, but absolutely honest.

Kitty Glenham came next, leaning on the arm of her brother. As Marion was introduced they both looked her over critically.

"A beauty," murmured Roy Glenham, as they passed on among the guests; "and she has the inside track on Lord Curry already. Oh, well, who cares for a Lord, when there's a Duke within reach, sister?"

"Miss Rushlyn will bag the Duke, without doubt," said Kitty Glenham, quickly. "He's sure of her, they say—still he hasn't seen Miss Marlowe."

Marion was getting accustomed to her surroundings sufficiently to quite enjoy them now, but the costumes of the ladies had brought a crimson blush to her face. Every one who had been presented had given a sharp glance to her modestly exposed neck, and, in one or two instances, the expressions of surprise were amusing.

Young girls passed before her with shoulders and necks exposed in what Marion thought was a shocking manner. But Marion was trying to put her own feelings aside; she was in the hallowed precincts of society and, while she marveled, she was silent.

Suddenly she was surrounded by a bevy of chattering young girls, some of whom were really as sweet and lovable as Marion herself, and just then Mrs. Stetson came toward her, leaning on the arm of Bert Jackson.

It was an experience that Marion will never forget, and for an instant it was absolutely impossible to control her features.

As she glanced around quickly she saw Lord Curry's eyes fixed upon her, and their expression sobered her instantly.

But Bert was as composed as though there was nothing unusual about it. He stared at Marion blankly and acknowledged the introduction with great dignity.

"I am honored, indeed, Miss Marlowe," he said, with a graceful bow; "it was so kind of dear Mrs. Stetson to invite me this evening. Ah, good-evening, Miss Rushlyn—good-evening, Miss Glenham."

Bert had suddenly noticed these two young ladies at Marion's side and, as he knew them both, he was glad of the opportunity to speak to them at just that minute.

A little later the Duke was announced and Marion's heart beat faster in spite of her indifference to titles. There was a perfect rush to greet him the moment his name was mentioned, and, for awhile, Marion was left alone with Lord Curry, at one end of the big parlors.

"Don't forget the castle, Miss Marlowe," he murmured, mischievously. "Oh, what wouldn't I give to have a castle!"

"Would you be happier if you had bought a bride with a tumble-down old castle than with your own individual charms?" asked Marion, quickly.

"Happiness is not for such as I," was the moody answer; "I am a creature of circumstances which have been made for me by my ancestors."

"Break loose from them," whispered Marion, as she saw Mrs. Stetson coming, surrounded by guests, who were all talking together. Marion strained her eyes to get a glimpse of the Duke, but the advance guard of the group was Gus Van Twiller.

"Aw! So chawmed to meet the deah Duke again, don't you know, Miss Marlowe! Weally, I am almost wattled! I am, 'pon honor!"

Marion was glad that she was not obliged to reply, for, at that moment, the group separated a little, so that she was able to see the Duke distinctly. To save her she could not help the look that swept over her features. It was the second trying moment she had experienced during the evening. The man whom Mrs. Stetson was bringing forward was the most unattractive specimen of humanity that had ever crossed the range of her vision.

He was small and dark, with beady eyes and a receding forehead, while his nose and mouth were large and repulsive.

Only the strong, wide chin kept him from looking absolutely idiotic.

Yet these society ladies, or most of them, fairly swarmed about him, and their compliments might readily have turned the head of a far wiser man than the ill-favored possessor of a title and a castle.

Marion nerved herself to meet the Duke politely. She had caught the eyes of Miss Rushlyn and Lord Curry upon her, and a spirit of mischief took possession of her at once—they should never know just how she felt toward his Grace.

The next moment she was laughing and chatting with the Duke and, much to her astonishment, she found him very pleasant and fairly clever.

His little eyes twinkled with admiration as he looked at her and, when dancing was announced, even Mrs. Stetson was surprised, for the Duke asked the privilege of leading the cotillion with Marion.

Black looks would have followed them had such expressions of anger been allowable. As it was, only smiles met Marion's gaze, but the resentment which Miss Rushlyn, in particular, felt for her was none the less bitter because of its being smothered.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD CURRY AND MARION DISAGREE.

"The Duke was very cordially received last night," remarked Lord Curry, the day after the presentation party, as he met the two ladies at luncheon. "Such an ovation as

that must be very gratifying. It's no wonder he looked and acted a bit uneasy."

"I thought him remarkably cool until he caught sight of Marion," said Mrs. Stetson, with a sly glance toward the young girl; "after that he had no eyes or ears for any one—even Miss Rushlyn was neglected, and I fancy she resented it."

"She did, indeed!" said Lord Curry, smiling; "I tried to console her, but she would hardly speak to me."

"Yes, and then it was Kitty Glenham's turn to show resentment," said Mrs. Stetson, laughing. "Oh, it is cruel, the way you are treating poor Kitty!"

The young Englishman smiled again. He was used to Mrs. Stetson and, furthermore, it was no secret that Kitty Glenham liked him.

Lord Curry had been over the season before, and it was no fault of Miss Glenham's that he did not marry her.

But Lord Curry, in spite of his need of wealth, was not caught in the net that this young girl had spread for him.

There were other girls whom he met who did not fling themselves so promptly at his head, and one of that number was the proud Maude Rushlyn.

Now, even Maude Rushlyn was in danger of being forgotten. The eyes of the beautiful girl before him had stirred a new feeling in his soul, and Lord Curry was hesitating where he had never hesitated before—on the narrow line between love and ambition.

No girl had thrilled him to the heart as Marion had. The touch of no other hand had ever awakened so many emotions or caused the blood in his veins to pulsate so furiously. But, of course, Lord Curry had seen the paragraph in the newspaper and, of course, he knew that it was intended for the Duke. There was no hope of his ever winning his hostess' "approval."

"By the way," he asked, trying to get away from his thoughts; "who is that Mr Jackson, Mrs. Stetson? I took a great fancy to him last night—he was so frank and manly."

"The son of an old friend," was Mrs. Stetson's prompt answer; "a little young to be in society, but a perfect gentleman, as you saw for yourself."

"I envy him."

Lord Curry spoke from the bottom of his heart.

"Why so?"

It was Marion who asked the question.

"He is as free as the air," was the answer, with a harsh laugh. "He has no dignity to uphold, no fixed position to fill. Society has no claims upon him save what he sees fit to give it."

Marion Marlowe looked up with almost a sneer upon her lips.

"He has the dignity of honor upon his shoulders," she said, sternly; "moreover, he has a man's position in the world to fill, so why should he be a slave to the caprices of society?"

"But no one expects him to accomplish certain things," said the Englishman, uneasily; "he is not tormented by a vision of frowning ancestors."

Marion's burst of laughter astonished him a little.

"No, his ancestors don't worry him very much, I fancy," she said, gayly; "but why should a man sink his own individuality and fetter his freedom because of his ancestors?"

"I don't know why he should," was the grave reply; "but I do know that if he marries beneath him in the opinion of his family he loses the prestige in society that is his by rank and, after that, there can be no happiness for him."

"I can understand that position, I think," began Mrs. Stetson, slowly, but Marion broke in in her impulsive manner.

"Well, I can't," she said, in a ringing voice. "No man marries beneath him when he marries a lady! Why, what difference can there be in a mere accident of birth?"

Mrs. Stetson laughed as she answered, quickly:

"You must not expect Englishmen to share your sentiments, Marion," she said, kindly. "Their love of the purple is bred in the bone, while we, thank God, are free-born republicans."

"I should not mind 'wearing the purple' myself, but I should hate to feel it so heavy on my shoulders that it became a yoke to enslave me," said the young girl, hotly.

Lord Curry flushed to the roots of his hair

It was not often that his ears were treated to such plain language.

What might have been an awkward moment was broken by the entrance of a servant, bringing in a tray of leters.

"Invitations by the dozen: just as I thought," said Mrs. Stetson, quickly.

"The Rushlyns give a reception for the Duke to-night," said Lord Curry, who had opened one of his letters. "That is rather quick time to make arrangements, isn't it, Mrs. Stetson?"

Mrs. Stetson laughed in her good-natured way.

"Maude's mother doesn't intend to let the grass grow under her feet, evidently," was her answer. "The Duke himself will be to blame if he doesn't win her this season; they are making it easy for him to rebuild his castle."

Suddenly, Marion burst into a peal of laughter. She had discovered that one of the letters on the tray was for her, and while the others were busily reading she had opened it quietly.

"Oh, Mrs. Stetson, I have a note from that young Van Twiller!" she exclaimed, merrily; "and, what do you think he says: That I am a charming young person and he has really decided to devote himself to me, although he knows that by so doing he will make all the other girls in our set fairly green with envy at his showing such a preference."

"The dear soul—how sweet of him!" murmured Mrs. Stetson, sarcastically.

"I'd like to flog him, the impudent puppy!"

Lord Curry spoke so sharply that both ladies looked at him curiously. A moment later he excused himself and went out of the room.

"You are doing splendidly, dear," remarked Mrs. Stetson, complacently. "Maude Rushlyn and Kitty Glenham are jealous already, and I can almost see your coronet, Marion. Mark my words, it will look sweet on those chestnut tresses."

"And the Duke?" asked Marion, with a merry smile.

"I fancy he will die early," said Mrs. Stetson, calmly. "He looks consumptive, anyway, and then flattery is very sickening—a month or two more and he will be well worth considering."

"I'm glad you are not serious," said Marion, laughing; "but, oh, Mrs. Stetson, why isn't Lord Curry a Duke? He's so much nicer—and then, he's almost handsome!"

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNEXPECTED CONFIDENCE.

The reception at Mrs. Rushlyn's was to be a very important function for Marion, but she did not dream of what the evening would bring forth when she arrived at the stately mansion.

The Duke was already in the spacious parlor, and when Marion first caught sight of him he was chatting sociably with Maude Rushlyn.

The moment he saw Marion he came to her side, and it was with a great deal of difficulty that Maude Rushlyn concealed her anger.

"The Duke seems genuinely smitten," she murmured to Roy Glenham, who was standing near.

"It is Mrs. Stetson's doings, of course," was the answer; "but I can't quite understand why she is angling for them both. The Duke is enough without Lord Curry."

"Is he smitten, also?" asked Miss Rushlyn, quickly.

"Look at him."

Roy Glenham spoke briefly, but it was quite sufficient.

A disagreeable frown rested upon the fair face for just a second, as she caught the look of admiration that Lord Curry was bestowing upon Marion.

"Come in here a minute, Roy," she murmured, as she stepped toward the conservatory. "Every one is talking—they will not miss us for just a second."

Roy Glenham followed her in among the stately palms and rich orchids, and the two faced each other for the space of a minute.

"Who is that girl, anyway, Roy?" was the whispered question.

"A country girl who has been an actress, if nothing more—not a fit associate for you, Maude," was the eager answer.

"The Duke must know that—will you tell him?"

The girl murmured the question sweetly. As she looked up she saw her companion gazing down at her admiringly.

"I'll do anything for you, Maude, of course," he said, quickly; "although I'll be honest and admit that I'd like to see Kit win the coronet."

"She doesn't want it, and I do," said Miss Rushlyn, coolly; "she's in love with Lord Curry and will never get over it—I'm in love with no one but my own sweet self. Come, do me a favor, tell the Duke of Miss Marlowe."

"A hard thing for a gentleman to do," began Glenham, but a quick look from his companion's eyes made his face flush a little.

"I'll do it, of course, Maude. Anything at all to please you!" he said, quickly. "I'll learn Miss Marlowe's pedigree and make it known to the Duke; but that gives me *entrée* to the castle, doesn't it, Maudie?"

"Of course," laughed Miss Rushlyn, with a little blush; "but come, there are more guests and I'm not on hand to receive them."

She stepped back into the spacious room, where the guests were laughing and chatting, while Roy Glenham walked slowly to the opposite end of the parlor.

"It's my only chance," he muttered to himself. "Maude aims for the coronet, and that is all there is about it. I hate to give her up, but it's a title *versus* money, and the title wins."

He shrugged his shoulders angrily. The next moment he had forgotten Miss Rushlyn completely, for he was watching the faces of the men who were fairly swarming about Miss Marlowe.

"If she were a queen she would not receive any more attention, would she, Glenham?" said a voice at his side.

Roy Glenham turned around and discovered Bert Jackson.

"You and I seem to be the only two who are not smitten," laughed Glenham; "but did you ever see such a get-up as Van Twiller has on to-night? There's only one person in the room who can touch him, and that's his companion, Jack Wurtemburg, the chap standing by Mrs. Stetson."

"They remind me of apes—English apes, don't you know," said Bert, glancing at the two dudes; "but talk about being smitten—they are both dead gone on Miss Marlowe."

"Well, they'll stand no chance there with the Duke in sight," said Glenham; then it suddenly occurred to him that this boy might be useful.

"Actresses are so lofty in their aspirations, you know," he went on, with a glance at Bert that was supposed to be confidential; "and, of course, a girl like Miss Marlowe, who is really out of place in good society, is just the kind to aim high, even though she knows there is no chance for her."

Luckily, Glenham's glance had wandered as he finished the sentence, so he did not see the flash of anger that lit the eyes of young Jackson.

"Mrs. Stetson is really atrocious at times," went on the fellow, glibly; "she is very rich and a leader, but for all that she is unbearable! The idea of her forcing an adventuress upon us! Why, if the Duke knew what she was he would be highly indignant."

Bert Jackson clutched his hands tightly together and bit his lips. There was just one motive that restrained him from prompt action.

With a cleverness that he really did not know he possessed he adopted Glenham's manner and became very confidential.

"You know all about her, then? Why don't you tell the Duke? Pardon me, Mr. Glenham, but in my humble opinion, get Miss Marlowe out of the way and there is a chance for your sister."

"You really think so?"

Glenham was excited in an instant.

"I am almost positive," went on Bert, calmly; "Miss Rushlyn may think she has a chance, but, take my word, she isn't in it."

Bert appeared so serious that Roy Glenham smiled radiantly. He would have given his all to capture the Duke for his sister.

Aside from wanting to marry Miss Rushlyn himself, he was ambitious for Kitty and, as a clever match-maker, he rivaled even Mrs. Stetson.

He would have been glad of another word with young Jackson, but his hostess beckoned

to him, and in a moment he, too, was mingling in the crowd about Marion.

"A cad and a sneak," whispered Bert, as he moved away. "Oh, I'll watch you, young man, and see what you mean to do! So Marion Marlowe is an adventuress, is she?"

"Oh, Mr. Jackson, how do you do?" cried Kitty Glenham, the next minute. She disengaged her hand from an elderly lady's arm and stepped before him, with a sweet smile on her features.

"Oh, I don't do very well," was Bert's doleful reply. "I'm such a kid, Miss Glenham, that none of the ladies will talk to me. Won't you please take mercy on me and talk a minute?"

Miss Glenham nodded to her companion, who moved a short distance further on, and in another minute Bert was leading the young lady to the refreshment room.

"I've been dying to talk to you alone ever since I first met you, Miss Glenham," began Bert, promptly; "but these social functions are such crazy things one hardly gets introduced before one has to say good-evening."

"And that is about all one cares to say," broke in Miss Glenham, quickly; "especially where one is introduced to commonplace actresses and forced to be wall flowers at a function which is supposed to be for the aristocracy."

CHAPTER X.

BERT DOES A LITTLE THINKING.

For the second time that evening, Bert felt like knocking some one down, but, for the second time, he controlled himself admirably.

"You refer to Miss Marlowe, I presume," he said, very calmly; "and is it true, do you think, that she is really after his joblots?"

Miss Glenham turned upon him with a look of surprise.

"Beg pardon! I mean his Grace," corrected Bert, quickly. "You see, I took in Whitechapel when I was over there, and, well, I 'fawncy' my visit rather corrupted my English—but do you think that Miss Marlowe is really hoping to wear the coronet?"

Miss Glenham shrugged her shoulders as she accepted a confection from a waiter.

"I'm sure I don't know or care," she said, sweetly; "but I must confess I am disgusted with Lord Curry! The Duke can look out for himself, but Lord Curry is so susceptible."

"Humph! I should fancy he might be—to wealth!" thought Bert, but out loud he only said:

"I should never have guessed it, but, then, you ladies are so clever—you read us just as you would a novel."

"Yes, a woman can trust her intuitions," said Miss Glenham, quickly, and just then a group of ladies and gentlemen came in and Bert was forced to keep silent on the subject. But, as he watched and listened, he did a good deal of thinking, and once he smiled sarcastically as he thought how little they knew Marion.

He knew, if they did not, that this was all distasteful to the candid country girl; still, he did not doubt that she was being somewhat amused by it.

The little country girl was decidedly out of her element, and Bert was honestly perplexed over what was to be the outcome.

The Duke came in after a while with Marion on his arm, and Bert was delighted to see how radiantly beautiful she was looking.

"She'll win hands down! There isn't one of them that can touch her!" he muttered, to himself. "She'll corral that coronet and all that goes with it, unless some one tells tales about her, and scares his joblots off; and the fellow that does that will have me to settle with!"

As he was thinking he chanced to notice Roy Glenham. He was some distance away, leaning over the bare shoulder of Miss Rushlyn.

The conversation between the two appeared to be very earnest, and Bert would have given a good deal to have heard what they were saying.

"It's Rushlyn's doings, I'll bet," was his mental comment. "She wants the Duke and Glenham wants her. She's trying to make a cat's-paw of him and he's going to fool her. Well, I guess it will be advisable for little Bertie to keep his eyes open. There are others who think that Marion is an adven-

turess, but their thoughts won't hurt any one so long as they don't mention them."

"I am neglecting you, Mr. Jackson," said Miss Glenham, suddenly.

She had been chatting with two or three ladies, but turned to her escort at last.

"I'm used to it, so it doesn't matter," said Bert, a trifle loftily. "If I was a Duke now, or even a Lord, I'd stand a better chance, but we can't all be attractive, can we, Miss Glenham? I consider I'm lucky in one thing, though—I'm not such a jay as either Wurtemberg or Van Twiller!"

"Miss Marlowe likes 'jays,' apparently," said Miss Glenham, softly, as she took a swift look around the magnificent room.

Bert's glance followed her own, and his lips twitched with amusement. Marion had actually turned from the Duke and was chatting with the two dudes, and the noble guest was so nettled that he was actually scowling.

"Gee! He is hopping mad!" whispered Bert, delightedly. "It's little that Miss Marlowe cares for him or his title! There's no toady about her—she's thoroughly American!"

Miss Glenham turned upon him with an astonished look.

"You don't understand her—she's tricky," she said, severely; "as if she did not know she was tormenting the Duke and that he will like her a great deal better for her assumed indifference."

"So you think there is danger of his really liking her, do you?" asked Bert.

Miss Glenham smiled sarcastically as she answered:

"Now that he knows that Mrs. Stetson intends to give her a million or two—yes. Before that she would not have had a ghost of a chance with Maude Rushlyn."

"Whew! Is that true?" asked Bert, who had not heard of Mrs. Stetson's extraordinary offer.

Miss Glenham was glad of an opportunity to relieve her mind on that subject.

"Oh, yes!" she said, promptly; "a marriage between her *protégée* and the Duke is worth that amount to Mrs. Stetson! It would mean that she would be established as prime minister of the royal establishment, and that is something that she has always wanted. Of course, the old lady cannot marry the Duke herself, so she has planned to have him marry Miss Marlowe."

"Well, I can just see her doing it!" said Bert, with some scorn. "Mrs. Stetson has made a mistake for once, or, in other words, she has 'driven her ducks to the wrong market,' this time. Miss Marlowe will come pretty near doing as she pleases, and she'll not marry the Duke because there is a title behind it!"

"You are very unsophisticated—you don't understand," said Miss Glenham, sweetly.

Bert was about to reply, but, just then, Roy Glenham came up and his sister was obliged to answer some questions.

Marion was devoting herself to Jack Wurtemburg at the time, almost under the nose of Jack's watchful mamma, and Roy Glenham thought he saw a chance to get the Duke and his sister a little nearer together. Miss Rushlyn was thinking the same thing, only for herself instead of Miss Glenham, so it happened that both of the young ladies started toward the Duke at the same time.

Marion Marlowe replied to one of Wurtemburg's idiotic remarks at the same moment that she noticed the movement of the two young ladies, and, in an instant, the spirit of mischief seemed to take possession of her.

"Think they can take him away from me," she thought, as she read the expression on their faces.

The next moment she addressed the Duke in her musical voice, and that noble personage turned around at once, leaving both Miss Rushlyn and Kitty Glenham actually staring at his shoulders.

No amount of drilling in social etiquette could have prevented the expression which crossed Maude Rushlyn's face.

She flashed a glance of hatred from her cold, blue eyes that would have made Marion tremble a little if she had seen it.

"Let me get you a cup of chocolate," said Roy Glenham, in her ear, at that moment.

His offer was most opportune and Miss Rushlyn accepted it gladly. The smile which she bestowed upon him fully repaid him for the effort he had made to be at her side at a time when he was needed.

Kitty Glenham had found some one to speak to, also; so, although the incident was not to be easily forgotten, it was over with only an instant's embarrassment.

"Marion scores one," thought Bert, with a laugh in his eyes; still he felt a little anxious, for he could see that she had made an enemy of Miss Rushlyn. "It's lucky I'm not supposed to know her," he muttered to himself; "gives me that much better chance to learn the schemes of her enemies."

The balance of the evening seemed like a curious puzzle to Bert. He studied the faces around him and tried to read their expressions, all in the ardent hope of being able to protect Marion.

He was mystified by nothing so much as Marion's acceptance of Mrs. Stetson's offer, but, like the true, loyal friend that he was, he trusted her implicitly. Marion, with all her unsophisticated innocence, had aroused the social demon of jealousy, and Bert was keenly alive to the dangers of her position.

Her beauty was so fresh, so pure and so sweet that she shone like a radiant flower in this hotbed of artificiality.

True, there were both matrons and maidens in those parlors who were most lovable and fair, but, as Mrs. Van Twiller had said, "the odor of the meadows" still clung about Marion, and to other eyes besides the Duke's this did not seem to be objectionable.

Marion was girlish and frank, and her laugh rang out fearlessly. Neither wealth nor rank could awe her naturally independent spirits, and as Lord Curry watched her he became almost sullen in his manner. He had been monopolized all the evening by one or two of the less aspiring belles and had hardly had a chance for a word with Marion.

But before the evening was over the young Englishman had arrived at a startling conclusion.

He had learned that, in spite of his high ambitions for a brilliant marriage, he had become desperately in love with this country maiden.

CHAPTER XI.

AN HONEST AVOWAL.

As the days passed and Marion grew accustomed to these functions, she entered more and more into the spirit of Mrs. Stetson's ambitious planning, but upon one subject Marion had suddenly become inflexible—she was determined not to be under obligations to Mrs. Stetson for any more dresses.

"I'll just wear my own simple costumes," she said, decidedly; "for you know, Mrs. Stetson, this is only a temporary arrangement and, in a few weeks at most, I must go back to earning my own living."

Mrs. Stetson smiled peculiarly, but did not reply. Thus far she had succeeded in concealing her real motives from Marion.

"I wonder what will come next?" she said to Marion one morning, after a particularly brilliant function. She was seated at the breakfast table as she made the remark, and Marion glanced up merrily as she answered her:

"Brain fever, I fancy! Why, do you know, Mrs. Stetson, this excitement is killing me! Really, when I retired last night my head was spinning like a top, and this morning I can't say that it is very much steadier."

"And to think, you only drank chocolate all the evening," exclaimed Lord Curry, coming in just as she finished.

"It doesn't need anything in the way of a beverage to make my head spin," laughed Marion; "really, Mr. Van Twiller's flattery is sufficient to set my brain to reeling—it not only makes me faint, but actually dizzy."

Mrs. Stetson laughed, but Lord Curry looked serious.

"I noticed that he bored you, and I felt very sorry for you," he said, quickly. "Really, I feel ashamed of my countrymen when I look at Wurtemburg and Van Twiller! Do we Englishmen really look and act like that, Miss Marlowe?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Lord Curry, I have only seen a few Englishmen," said Marion, candidly; "but those I have seen were all of them gentlemen, while those two stupid boys answer to no description whatsoever. They remind me of the caricatures one sees in the papers."

"Dear me, how Jack and Gus would feel if they knew you thought that, Marion," laughed Mrs. Stetson: "why, I understand that they have registered a solemn vow to

flirt desperately with you for the entire season."

"What for, please?" asked Marion, in an astonished voice

Mrs. Stetson shook with laughter before she answered.

"Just to make Maude Rushlyn and Kitty Glenham jealous," she explained. "Why, Marion, the deah boys have ambitions, don't you know? They 'aspiah to the hands of our 'wichest' heiresses!"

Once more Lord Curry's face grew crimson with shame.

"It is exactly as I said! We are to blame, Miss Marlowe! Why, what are those two dudes doing but aping the Duke and myself, only that I, perhaps, am the only one of the lot who is honest enough to admit it! And I would not own it, either, if Mrs. Stetson did not know me so well," he added, bitterly. "There's no use in a poor foreigner attempting to deceive Mrs. Stetson. She knows what brings the most of us over here, but she is more just than some—she does not blame us for preferring her bright countrywomen."

"If you really prefer them, then you are justified," said Marion, gravely; "but the matter of money should be no consideration."

"Nevertheless, you admit that a title is tempting," said Lord Curry, quickly; "so much so that you do not hesitate to make every unmarried woman in the room jealous of you every evening, Miss Marlowe!"

"Oh, not quite all," answered Marion, with a shrug of her shoulders. "I have met several nice girls who are not interested in the Duke—Kitty Glenham, for instance," she said, glancing at him archly.

"What Miss Glenham does not want for herself her brother wants for her," spoke up Mrs. Stetson, quickly. "Roy Glenham is a cad who ought to be kicked out of our set! I would never invite him to the house if it wasn't for the family."

"Dear me! Is there no such thing as individual worth and individual punishment in society?" asked Marion. "Why, at home in the country, when I had a party I asked the members of the family whom I respected, and not the others, and no one ever dreamed of resenting such a natural preference."

"And with us such a thing would be a deadly insult," said Mrs. Stetson. "If I invite Kitty Glenham I must invite her brother, also although I know him to be a thoroughly unprincipled fellow."

The young girl shuddered at such a revelation. She had not expected to meet "cads" or "unprincipled fellows" in society.

"We must not look below the surface," said Lord Curry, dryly; "that is what etiquette is for. It is a sort of veneer. It covers a multitude of sins that would shock us, and because of that it is really very useful."

"Very deceiving, I should say!" broke in Marion, warmly. "If a man is bad it ought to show all over him, then a woman can avoid him as she would a pestilence! Heaven help us if the wolves are all to come to us in sheep's clothing! It means that we will be forced to grow suspicious, even of our neighbors!"

"The sooner the better," remarked Mrs. Stetson. "Suspicion never hurts any one, my dear Marion. Treat a man with suspicion until you have proven him honest. It doesn't hurt the man and you may be saved considerable trouble."

"I'll never do that!" said Marion, stoutly. "I'd rather die than lose faith in human beings, but we are getting too serious, aren't we, Lord Curry?"

She had glanced up quickly and had seen the look in his eyes. It was as if her words were stirring every impulse in his soul, with the result that his thoughts were becoming decidedly bitter.

"Yours is a serious nature in spite of your smiles, Miss Marlowe," he tried to say naturally; "but there is no danger of you ever misjudging a human being. You are more likely to be misjudged, and that means that you must suffer."

"I have suffered already," said Marion, sweetly; "but I would rather suffer from the wrongs of others than to bear the remorse of having wronged another."

Mrs. Stetson left the room as Marion was speaking. She was a clever woman and had been watching her guests intently. There was an avowal of something trembling on the lips of Lord Curry. She went away in order that it might be uttered.

"Miss Marlowe, you are the noblest and sweetest girl that I have ever met," whispered the young man, the moment the door closed.

"You have shamed me out of my inherited ambitions! You have shown me what a slave I am to social position! Further, you have forced me to acknowledge what I have never dreamed was possible, that is, that I love a woman who is not my social equal!"

The words had fallen from his lips with thrilling vehemence, and, as Marion looked up in astonishment, the gleam in his dark eyes startled her.

"Listen, Miss Marlowe!" he went on, earnestly. "Listen, and pity me if you can! It is my misfortune to be of what is termed 'noble birth.' My family, dead and living, demand that I marry to please their taste, and to do this my bride must have not only a

flawless pedigree, but a goodly sum of money! There is no girl in my country who interests me a jot—for, in spite of my inheritance, I refuse to marry and be miserable. Miss Rushlyn attracted me until—until I met you, Marion. Now, I love you, do you understand? I love you, Marion, yet I cannot say the words that I long to say. I cannot ask you to marry me because of my family!"

There was no chance for so much as a word when he finished, for, before Marion could catch her breath, Lord Curry had rushed from her presence.

CHAPTER XII.

AN "ACCIDENT."

"Honest, to say the least!"

Marion spoke the words aloud, then, as soon as she could collect her wits, she burst out laughing.

"What was it, Marion—a proposal?" asked Mrs. Stetson, as she opened the door softly and then closed it behind her.

"Far from it!" cried the young girl, with her eyes twinkling with mischief. "I have been refused, my dear Mrs. Stetson, and before I have so much as stated my intentions!"

"For Heaven's sake, tell me all about it, child!" urged the lady, dismayed, as she drew Marion down beside her upon the sofa.

The young girl repeated every word exactly as the young man had uttered them, and, as she finished, she was surprised to hear Mrs. Stetson sigh deeply.

"Poor fellow! I do pity him, Marion," she said, quietly. "As I told you before, it is 'bred in the bone.' Lord Curry is a fine fellow, but his exalted station will be the death of him."

It did not occur to the lady that her words were ominous—it was only a figure of speech that she was uttering, but, as has happened before, the meaning proved literal.

"I have less patience with that sort of thing than you have, I guess," said Marion, soberly; "but when a man seeks a bride for her money it disgusts me—and to think that I am not as worthy of his honor as either Miss Glenham or Miss Rushlyn!"

There was a flash of pride in the wide, gray eyes as, just for once, Marion's temper got the better of her.

"He knows that you are—in his soul," said Mrs. Stetson, quickly; "and if he had his way he would marry you to-morrow. He loves you with all the strength of his nature—only his love for rank and wealth is greater. He inherits that from generations, while he doesn't the other."

"Well, his affection would never have had much weight with me, anyway, so it doesn't make any difference," said the fair girl, more calmly; "still one would have thought that he would have jumped at your offer, Mrs. Stetson! Is it possible that he hasn't seen that paragraph in the paper!"

A shrewd look settled in the society leader's eyes.

"If he saw it, he understood it," she answered, very calmly. "Lord Curry has sense enough to know he would never win my approval." Marion looked up quickly, with a little stare in her eyes.

"So you did really mean that for the Duke?" she questioned, eagerly. "You do actually intend that I shall be a Duchess?"

"I do, indeed," was the lady's prompt answer; "but, remember, I shall never try to force you, Marion! Heaven knows, I despise a 'money match' above all things! I made one myself, and I have tested them, I assure you! If you can care for the Duke, marry him, by all means. If you can't, why, throw him over, but not until you have won the coronet, figuratively speaking, and can toss it in disdain into Maude Rushlyn's lap. It will be a triumph for me that will be well worth having."

"You do not like Maude Rushlyn," said Marion, slowly.

Mrs. Stetson rose, but did not answer.

"A title is a grand thing to possess and I would dearly like to own one," went on the young girl, thoughtfully; "but the Duke is ugly and anything but an ideal lover. He is not half as attractive as Lord Curry, even, and I know other gentlemen who are far more noble than either."

Marion was thinking of Mr. Ray and Dr. Brookes as she spoke, but, as it happened, Mrs. Stetson was too deep in her own thoughts to ask any questions.

"A tea at the Glenhams," said Mrs. Stetson, absently, as she picked up a crested envelope that lay on the table. "By the way, dear, Regie Brookes will be there, I think. I shall be glad to have you meet him," said she, quickly.

Marion stepped back a bit and smiled sweetly at her hostess.

"Another little secret that I must tell you, dear Mrs. Stetson," she said, gayly. "Dr. Brookes and I are the dearest of friends. Can you blame me for not being desperately smitten with either the Duke or Lord Curry?"

Mrs. Stetson laughed, but she glanced at Marion sharply.

"Your friends are men to be proud of," she said, quietly; "that is, if they are all like the doctor and Bert Jackson."

"You like Bert, then! Oh, I am so glad, Mrs. Stetson!"

"He's as clever as they make, even if he is young, Marion, and listen! Lord Curry is not the only man who is smitten with your charms. Young Jackson is only a boy, but he loves you dearly."

"Oh, that is an old story," cried Marion, gayly. "Bert has loved me from childhood, if one can trust his word—and, what is more, he has plainly stated his intention to marry me."

"Well, he has encountered a formidable rival, now," laughed her hostess; "it is not every youth of eighteen who can measure weapons with a Duke for the hand of a beautiful maiden."

"I doubt if Bert considers him a rival, he is so sure of his ultimate victory," began Marion, then both ladies stopped speaking and stared at each other. The report of a pistol sounded directly over their heads. As Mrs. Stetson darted from the room, Charlotte, the maid, came rushing toward her shrieking hysterically.

"He's killed himself, madam!" was all she could say.

"Quick! Come, Marion!" cried Mrs. Stetson, as she dashed up the stairs. "Poor Lord Curry! I am afraid he has met with an accident!"

CHAPTER XIII.

MORE SURPRISES.

But it was not an accident that Lord Curry had met with, and both Mrs. Stetson and Marion knew it as soon as they reached his chamber. The young man was sitting in a chair, the revolver still in his hand, and there were evidences of deliberation in all of his arrangements.

Mrs. Stetson's level-headedness was never used to better advantage than when she attempted to adjust affairs so as to conceal the true motive of the young Englishman's death, and, after the first shock, Marion was as calm as she, and both ready and willing to carry out all orders. Of course, neither of them attended Mrs. Glenham's tea, but the "sad accident" which had occurred came too late to prevent the function, although it cast a gloom upon it. Bert Jackson was there, with his ears and eyes wide open, and before he had been in the spacious rooms an hour he overheard an interesting conversation.

Bert had seated himself on a divan just outside of the conservatory, and the persons who were conversing softly together were standing just inside behind an urn of rare exotics.

"I heard it through the servants," said Maude Rushlyn's voice. "Mrs. Stetson's maid told our cook that Lord Curry committed suicide after proposing to Miss Marlowe and being refused by her."

"Curry was a fool to dream that she would have him," answered Roy Glenham, softly. "Why, it's as plain as daylight that she had her eye on the Duke, but I've 'queered her game,' if you will excuse my slang, Maudie."

"How? When?" demanded Miss Rushlyn, in a breathless whisper.

"Oh, I was fortunate enough to meet him in the park this afternoon. I threw out a gentle hint as innocently as possible, and you ought to have seen how greedily he snapped at it."

"You mean he believed you?" asked the young girl again.

"Every word, and almost begged me to tell him more," was the prompt answer. "Of course I told him it was all hearsay and might not be true, and of course he agreed with me, but that doesn't matter an atom. The seed is planted in his mind, and, you mark my words, it will grow and rankle!"

"Until he decides to choose a woman who is his equal socially," answered Miss Rushlyn. "It serves him right! He needed just such a lesson!"

"But, Maudie——"

Roy Glenham's voice had sunk to a whisper now.

Bert Jackson got up suddenly and walked away. He knew about what was coming, and did not care to hear it.

"I'm not interested in their love making," he muttered, as he caught sight of a young girl that he knew, sitting alone and almost neglected. "I'm only interested in what concerns Marion! So the cad has poisoned the Duke's mind. Well, his day is coming—when it comes, the Lord help him!"

Kittie Glenham was particularly attractive as she poured tea for the Duke, and all the time Bert was talking to his companion he watched them intently.

If Miss Glenham was distressed over Lord Curry's sudden death she was more than usually clever in concealing it.

She was pale, it was true, but she smiled as brightly as ever, and to the Duke no woman could have been more gushing and tender.

"Kittie doesn't take it as much to heart as we thought she would," said Bert's companion, suddenly. "Why, we all supposed she was in love with Lord Curry, but it looks very much as though we were all mistaken."

"I fancy it is hard telling just how you young ladies do feel," said Bert, smilingly; "you are so clever at concealing your real

emotions. But I suppose that is why there is such a fascination about you."

"Do you find us fascinating?" was the coquettish answer. "Well, of course, a girl like Miss Marlowe is enough to turn one's head, but, really, I can't see that women have so dreadfully many charms—I find the most of them terribly treacherous and jealous!"

"How can you say so?" said Bert, with great gravity. "Why, just look at Miss Rushlyn—she is almost a saint! It is no wonder that the Duke is dead in love with her."

"Nonsense! He isn't at all!" said the girl, candidly. "Why, I heard that he did not care for the money! That he really had old-fashioned notions about love and marriage."

"I wonder if that is true," said Bert, with an incredulous look in his eyes. "If he has then all I've got to say is, he's got more sense than I gave him credit for, and, moreover, he has courage to even give such an impression."

The girl was about to reply when there was a lull in the general conversation of the room—then Kittie Glenham said something that both heard distinctly.

"Yes, Lord Curry was refused by Miss Marlowe," she said, sweetly; "and the poor fellow killed himself from sheer disappointment. Why, it sounds like a love story, doesn't it, Mrs. Van Twiller?"

"It sounds more like a canard," spoke up Roy Glenham, quickly; "as if Lord Curry would have been so foolish! Why, he was the last man in the world to make a *mésalliance!*"

"But Miss Marlowe is Mrs. Stetson's *protégée,* we must not forget that," responded Mrs. Van Twiller.

"And a deucedly fine girl, too, don't you know!" broke in her son, and, for the first time since they had met, Bert felt like shaking hands with him.

"Oh, you boys all love actresses," said Mrs. Van Twiller, shaking her finger at her son; "really, a girl to attract attention has almost to go on the stage nowadays—our boys are stage-struck," she added, laughing.

The Duke had heard it all, but he merely shrugged his noble shoulders and went on talking to Maude Rushlyn in the most devoted manner.

Suddenly there was a little flutter, and Mrs. Wurtemburg entered. She was leaning on the arm of her flashily-dressed offspring.

"Dear me, have you heard the news?" she almost gasped, as she sank into a chair after exchanging greetings.

"Let me tell it, maw! You are weally too excited, don't you know," broke in her young hopeful.

Without waiting for her consent, Jack Wurtemburg told the news, which proved to be really another paragraph in the society columns of the evening paper.

"Dear Mrs. Stetson has given us another surprise, don't you know. Why, she has actually been looking up the pedigree of this Miss Marlowe, and she's awistocwatic, 'pon honor! A wegular blue-blood! Why, her gweat, gweat grandfather was an English baronet who came over in the Mayflower, just for a lark, the deah fellow!"

"Oh, Jack! How dreadfully you tell it," began his mother, but her words were lost in the surprise that followed. Bert Jackson's lips twitched, for he knew who was responsible for that paragraph. It had taken him and Marion's friend, Miss Allyn, an hour to compose it.

Suddenly it occurred to him to look and see how the Duke took it. He glanced at him calmly, and saw that he was as serene as ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHANCE TO BE A DUCHESS.

"A word with you, Mr. Glenham!" It was Bert Jackson who spoke. The two had met just inside of the portals of one of the most exclusive clubs, and Glenham had been about to pass with only a nod of greeting.

"What is it, Jackson?" he asked, a bit impatiently. "Sorry, but I'm in a hurry—engagement with the Duke at eleven."

"The Duke can wait," was the quiet answer. "No doubt the slander you have for him will keep, Mr. Glenham, and my message will not, so I shall be obliged to detain you."

"What do you mean?" asked Glenham, wheeling around furiously. "By what right do you presume to use the word 'slander?'"

"The right of a gentleman to tell the truth," said Bert, quietly. "You are going to the Duke with some more tales about Miss Marlowe—tales that you have conjured up out of your infamous brain, in the hope of making the Duke despise her and turn his attention toward your less beautiful sister. You see, I know all about it, my dear Mr. Glenham! If Miss Rushlyn knew as much, you'd soon be kicked out of her service."

"You impudent little puppy! How dare you?" began Glenham.

He made a threatening motion with his arm, but Bert did not flinch; instead, he snapped his fingers under the nose of his companion.

"I should be only too glad to have you hit me," he said with a sneer; "for it would give me an excuse for lambasting you this minute. However, as it is, I have a little warning to give you! Another lie from your lips in regard to Miss Marlowe, and I'll thrash you so thoroughly that you'll lose your identity completely. You'll imagine you are a whipped cur instead of a well-dressed coward!"

"If you were not a boy I would kill you," muttered Glenham furiously, but as he spoke he half turned as if to leave the building.

"You wouldn't do that—you are too afraid of the law," sneered Bert. "You are only a cad who attacks women's reputations!"

Glenham closed the door angrily and rushed off up the street, while Bert smiled to himself and walked calmly into the club-rooms. It was several days before the social circle met again, for all invitations had been recalled while the young Englishman's body lay in its casket at Mrs. Stetson's.

The day after it was shipped back to England the Duke made a formal call. It was really upon Marion, but he asked also to see Mrs. Stetson.

No one in the charmed circle knew exactly what happened in the spacious Stetson parlor, but when the Duke left he drove directly to his apartments at the Waldorf, and from there secured passage on the first outgoing steamer. If Mrs. Stetson was disappointed, she was far too polite to show it, and, after all, she had the satisfaction of knowing that her *protégée* had won the race over all her proud competitors. It pleased her to let the matrons of her set see how easily she could outwit them, and she was particularly glad to be able to laugh quietly at Mrs. Rushlyn.

It was a pity that the affair could not have been prolonged through one season at least, but Marion's spell had been too potent—the Duke could not withstand it.

"Such a pity that he should have taken it so to heart," Mrs. Stetson remarked to Mrs. Van Twiller the day the Duke left. "I knew, of course, that Miss Marlowe would refuse him, but with Miss Rushlyn and Miss Glenham to console him, you know—it seems really too bad that the Duke should have been [illegible]."

"Did she really refuse him?" asked Mrs. Van Twiller, eagerly.

"Why, my dear, she actually spurned him," was Mrs. Stetson's confidential answer. "Of course, you won't tell it to a single soul, but Marion actually had the coronet in her very grasp, and she tossed it from her as though it was nothing."

"I can't believe it! And she only a simple country girl!" murmured her hearer.

"A simple American girl, you mean, Mrs. Van Twiller; Marion is so sweet and lovely that even the Duke was willing to marry her without a penny, for at the hour of his proposal Marion told him plainly that she would never accept so much as a shilling from me, yet he only pressed his suit more ardently. Oh, the Duke is a splendid fellow, and no mistake, but in spite of the fact that I honored him for his choice, I am truly thankful that Marion refused him!"

"Maude Rushlyn will never forget it nor forgive—dear me—they will be enemies at Newport, I am sure, Mrs. Stetson."

Mrs. Stetson had invited Marion to visit her the next summer at the famous Rhode Island resort. Marion was on the point of accepting her invitation when the unfortunate death of Lord Curry caused her to change her mind.

"Oh, Marion has changed her mind: she is not going," said Mrs. Stetson, loftily. "To tell you the truth, she is not impressed with society."

"Well, did you ever!"

This was all that Mrs. Van Twiller was able to say. Such audacity as Marion's took her breath away completely.

And a few days later, when Gus Van Twiller and his chum Jack Wurtemburg met again, they shook hands so cordially that the clasp was painful.

"Worked like a charm, that ideah of yours, didn't it, old chappie! B' Jawve, I can see a difference in Kittie alweady," said Jack; "and the little actwess isn't so bad; weally, she is vewy pwetty. If it wasn't for Kittie's cawsh, I believe I'd fall in love with her, 'pon honor!"

"And Miss Wushlyn is not so cold, by hawf, as she was. Oh, a capital scheme that, of flirting with the actwess! Why, do

you know, deah boy, I weally feel flattered—didn't know I was so weally clever, don't you know. So seldom that the same person is both clevah and attwactive."

"Oh, I say, old chappie, have you seen Glenham lately? Weally, you'll be shocked when you see him—been sewapping with a gweat big bwute of a fellow," said Jack, suddenly.

"B' Jawve, I know who it was, too!" broke in Van Twiller excitedly; "it was Jackson, the new addition to our set, don't you know—not a bad sowt of fellow, but so dooc-edly healthy!"

"It's dweadful to be so wobust," said Wurtemburg, sadly. "'Pon honoh, I think it's almost wude and vulgah!"

But Bert Jackson was not distressing himself about the vulgarity of his good muscles; he had too much to occupy him in other directions.

For besides keeping an eye out for any treachery that Roy Glenham might see fit to indulge in, Bert was quietly spreading the story of Marion's refusal of the Duke, and his version of the tale was not lacking in embellishments.

Miss Allyn, the society reporter of the *Star*, and Marion's dearest friend, was his loyal ally, and the two vied with each other in thinking up new versions of the story, which were duly printed in the leading newspaper.

"Thought they could down her because she was a country girl and an actress," Bert said once, with a grin; "why, she won hands down, and had cards to spare—but she isn't the kind to be dazzled by a title!"

THE END.

Mrs. Stetson's statement that Marion Marlowe "was not impressed with society" was quite true. Great as her success had been, she preferred to be free from the glamour and artificiality of society life. Her experience had not been without benefit to her, however, as she was to learn later on. In turning away from the dazzling glare in which she had been moving, Marion turned naturally to the other side of the picture—the life of the over-worked girls and women in the sweatshops of the great city. In the next number of MY QUEEN (No. 13) a story entitled "Marion Marlowe's Risk; or, the Treachery of a Factory Inspector," will deal with the experiences the young girl had in visiting the factories and work-rooms in the company of a woman factory inspector. The inspector's own dishonesty and her treachery to Marion when the young girl attempted to help some of the unfortunate workers, together with the timely aid rendered by her old friend, Dr. Brookes, are some of the interesting features of this interesting story.

PATTERN COLUMN.

By special arrangements with the manufacturers we are enabled to supply the readers of MY QUEEN with the patterns of all garments described or illustrated in this column at TEN CENTS each. Address, "Pattern Column," MY QUEEN, 238 William Street, New York City.

☞ *In ordering patterns be sure to give size and number*

No. 2351—LADIES' FANCY WAIST WITH VEST FRONT.

Heliotrope all-wool satin duchess, one of this season's new materials, is here pictured with all-over lace and white silk accessories. The ends of the long revers collar meet the tops of small revers in front. A slight fullness is gathered at the lower edge of the waist both front and back. This design calls for the soft effect in wool fabrics or for silk. The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 42 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires 2 yards of 42-inch material.

No. 2370—AN AFTERNOON WAIST.

Dark brown satin taffeta with the sleeve puffs, yoke and collar of tan all-over lace and applique bands of lace, make an effective combination in this model. The material for the waist is tucked before being cut, as the pattern does not provide for making the tucks. The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 40 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires 3 1-2 yards of 21-inch or 2 yards of 42-inch material. As shown, 2 yards of 21-inch, with 1 3-8 yards of all-over, 1-2 yard of velvet and 2 1-2 yards of braid trimming.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY

GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department is a special feature of this publication, and it will be appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers. It is conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, has become well known. Readers of "MY QUEEN" need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and will never refuse her assistance or sympathy. As all letters are answered only through the columns of "MY QUEEN," it is unnecessary to enclose stamps. STREET & SMITH.

"I have read the correspondence department with great interest, and would, please, ask your advice in a matter that is perplexing me. About a year ago I became acquainted with a young man. We kept company together, and he seemed to think a good deal of me. But all of a sudden he went away. He did not let me know he was going. I heard nothing of him until about three months after he went, he wrote me and said he knew he did not do right by not letting me know he was going, and he said how bad it would make him feel if I did not answer. We corresponded for a while. He asked me to send my picture, and I did but did not receive an answer. That was about two months ago. I did not know I cared so much for him till he was gone. Please let me know if you think I should try to forget him or if you think he cares for me yet. ESTHER C."

The young man you write of, Esther, seems to be an "uncertain quantity." We should say that he was a little in doubt as to what he wanted himself, and would advise you to forget him, if possible. Thinking and worrying about him will not bring him back, nor will it increase his regard for you by so much as an atom.

While he is making up his mind what he wants, you may be able to find some young man who is not so slow in his decisions, and, perhaps, this is exactly what fate has in store for you.

"I have been married over four years, and it has been four years' unhappiness. I had not been married a month before my husband struck me, and for nearly a year my poor heart was broken. I did not love him when I married, but thought that would come in time, but I prayed to Heaven to make me a good wife.

"I went out to work and bought most of the furniture, and did all I could towards making a comfortable home. Yet it was not appreciated. I took his mother in my home, when her own daughter turned her out, and did all I could to make her happy. Yet I got no thanks, and my husband is a terrible drunkard and very brutish. He has thrown me on the floor and was coward enough to kick me. I have tried my best to put up with all this rather than cause any scandal, but now my nature rebels against all this, and he has killed what little respect I had for him. I am thinking very seriously of leaving him, but I have no one to advise me, so dear Miss Shirley, if I am not asking too much, kindly advise what is best to do. Now I see my folly in marrying for the sake of a home, which was my whole reason for marrying when I did, and I am all alone in this great country. Dear Miss Shirley, if I have not asked you too much, kindly advise me what I should do, and I can assure you, your advice will be appreciated. I shall await your reply very eagerly in 'My Queen.' ANNA S."

Such letters as this cause our very hearts to weep! Poor child, we cannot blame you for your folly in marrying as you did, for you have been bitterly punished already. We unhesitatingly advise you to leave your husband. In your most foolish moments you would probably not have married a drunkard had you known it. If you can help to support a husband you can certainly support yourself.

"Would you kindly tell me what you think, whether it makes any difference to marry a cousin. Last fall he came visiting to our home and he fell in love with me, told me so, and I love him also. He's been sending letters right along which I have answered. I'm nineteen and have a good home, but he wants me to marry. Some say there's no luck when cousins marry. Tell me what you think about this.

"GRACE O D."

We do not approve of cousins marrying. It is entirely contrary to the laws of marriage, as nature has ordained them. It is a great pity that you have formed this attachment, and we sincerely hope that you have sufficient strength of character to resist it. Write your cousin exactly how you feel in the matter and beg him to face the question squarely. More than yourselves are to be considered in this matter. Do not be too prudish or silly not to look at it from all standpoints. We blame your parents for not "nipping in the bud" this unfortunate attachment.

"I see by reading your weekly journal 'My Queen,' that you can answer any question that a person can ask. Now, I am very anxious to ask a few question as I am electing where we have your journals now on hand and selling them right along, and I am reading them and find them very interesting. So I would like to know what are your prices or how you arrange it.

"EDITH M."

We do not charge for our advice, Edith. It is to be had "without money and without price." We are only too glad if our words, coined from a varied experience, carry comfort or aid to those who ask for them. We never see young girls without longing to help them! They would be spared so much misery and sorrow if they would only heed the advice of those older than themseves, but many young girls are so conceited and headstrong that they will not listen—and what is the result? They plunge headlong into misery when they might have been saved from it. We will do our best to answer any questions you may ask.

"If you ever were in love you could sympathize with me and give me your advice. I have been going around to dances with a young man for two years, and he never dances with any one else if I am around. He never has attempted to make any engagement with me to come to my house to see me, although he works every evening except Sunday night. He belongs to a club, and he goes up there every Sunday night. His friends think he thinks a good deal of me, but he never gives me any encouragement to think so. He knows himself that I am in love with him for I cannot help from showing it. Please give me your advice whether you think I am foolish to waste my love and time on him. BESSIE T."

No doubt the young man has some good reason for not seeking more of your society. Why not let him have all the time he wants? It would be hardly modest in you to try and hurry him. Possibly you have been too free in showing your affection. A man always appreciates highest what he works hardest to attain. He may not really care for the affection that you have lavished on him. Why not try the experiment of dancing with some of the other young men, or what is wiser yet, staying away from public dances altogether?

"I have read your letters of advice with great interest and I write in hopes that you can kindly advise me in my trouble. I am a young man of twenty and have been paying attention to a young lady for nine months. I now find out that she is making of another fellow. Please advise me what I shall do to try and regain her affection. For it would break my heart to lose her. Hoping to hear from you at your earliest convenience. "T. O'B."

We should advise you to declare your affection at once to the young lady and then stand by the outcome. If she loves you she will give the other fellow up, and if she doesn't care for you, the sooner you know it the better. We trust that you are mistaken, and that the young lady is only testing your love, but if it is a fact that she does not care for you, always remember that "there are others," and that one lump of sugar is not so sweet but that another is equally so.

"Having read your answers to others, I hope you may help me in my great trouble. I am engaged to a man whom I love deeply, but my mother objects to him on account of being a railroad man. I am twenty-one and think myself able to choose for myself, but still hate to do a thing which will cause her sorrow. Shall I give up my lover and be unhappy, or go with him in spite of my mother? Dear Miss Shirley, please answer in 'My Queen' as soon as possible, as I shall wait your decision in great suspense. "DOROTHY C."

The Bible says that the wife should forsake father and mother and cleave only to her husband, and we think that this is the true course to follow. Every woman must choose her own husband according to the dictates of her own heart, but she should be willing to listen to the opinions of her parents and be guided by them as far as possible. Few girls of twenty-one possess sufficient judgment to select husbands. We should certainly advise you to consider the question a few months longer before deciding.

"My mother died a year and a half ago, and my father has just married the second time. His new wife is only five years older than I am, and it is impossible for me to have any respect for her. She tries hard to make up with me, but I won't have it. Would you advise me to leave home and come to New York to earn my own living? I won't stay at home under her rule, and I have no place where I can go. BEATRICE S."

There are thousands of young women in New York to-day looking for work. There are other thousands who have positions that pay them such small salaries that they are obliged to live part of the time on one meal a day and to sleep in an attic. There are more that have declared it impossible to subsist upon the pittances paid, and have sacrificed their souls in order to keep their bodies alive. This sort of experience falls to many who, like you, were anxious to come to New York. If your stepmother tries so hard to make you like her we would advise you to meet her at least half way. Do not let your temper or your prejudice get the best of you or allow her age to influence you. We believe that, if you tried, you could make a good friend of her and make a happy home for both her and yourself. Remember that she is just as much entitled to consideration as you are and put yourself in her place. Before you think of leaving home we would advise you to read "For Gold or Soul?" which will give you some idea of the troubles and temptations which surround young girls in this great city.

"Three years ago I obtained a divorce from my first husband and married a man whom I thought would be everything to me, but I was sorely disappointed. Recently I have learned that my former husband entertains a kindly feeling for me, and I would like to go back to him as he treated me the best of the two. Would you advise me to do it, and would it be wisest for me to have this understood with him before taking any steps in the matter? MRS. F. B. S."

We are unable to give you any advice in this instance. Your whole course of conduct is so contrary to the finer sentiments of womanhood that

we cannot look at matters from your standpoint.

You seem to want to secure the man who is the best investment regardless of any idea of affection and without any consideration for him. We presume that both of these men were deserving of a much better wife than they had. If you have any regard for the former, we would advise you not to go back to him. If he knew your sentiments in regard to him he would probably cease to have any kindly feeling for you. The only decent thing for you to do is to stick to your present husband and treat him as well as you are capable of doing.

"A friend of mine whom I have known ever since we went to school together wants me to go off on a bicycle ride with him for a couple of days. It will not be possible for us to make the trip we want to take without spending one night on the road. Do you think this would be very imprudent? Would it be better if we got a couple of friends to go along making a party of four?

"MINNIE P. L."

The bicycle has ruined more young girls than the much condemned skating rinks ever did. It is unwise for the young of both sexes to be thrown together under conditions where the proprieties are disregarded, temporarily. Unless you can take your mother or a relative much older than yourself along with you as chaperone, we would say decidedly not to make the trip.

To make up a party of four young people, as you suggest, would not improve matters. It would simply mean that another girl beside yourself took the chance of ruining her reputation for a couple of days' pleasure.

Be a little patient and you will probably soon have a chance to visit the same places of interest under circumstances that are not at all questionable.

"I think 'Marion Marlowe's Peril' is the best story I ever read. I liked the first number of 'My Queen,' and did not suppose that you could issue one that would surpass it, but each number has been better than the one before it. I have fallen in love with Marion herself and am sure that she must be Miss Grace Shirley herself. Please let me know if I have guessed right.

"MILLICENT J. B."

Your letter is one of the very many that we receive weekly commending this series of stories. You and our other kind friends may be sure that the interest in this series will not flag, nor will even one issue be less attractive than its predecessors. The author of the series has certainly experienced, personally, many of the episodes that fall to Marion Marlowe's lot, else she would not be able to picture them so graphically and with such accuracy as to details of places and scenes seldom seen by the average reader.

"An awfully good fellow has asked me to marry him. I think a lot of him; in fact, I guess I really love him, but while he has salary enough to support me, he could not do so in the style to which I have been accustomed. In spite of my affection for him, I am afraid I would not be happy with him for this reason. Please let me know whether you think I would be wise to marry him.

HATTIE V. V."

No; we do not think you would be wise to marry him or any other man. You certainly do not love him enough to do so or you would not think of style and luxuries. If he has income enough to support you and is such a good fellow you would not hesitate an instant if you really loved him. If physical comforts and the ability to keep up a certain style are of greater importance to you than a true and loving man, we would advise you to avoid the thought of marrying.

"I am seventeen years old and have gone out more or less for two years. They have just opened an artificial ice skating rink in our city, and as I enjoy the sport very much, I have been on the ice every night. My mother objects to this and says I am not old enough to be going out with men so much. She was married when she was my age, so I don't think she ought to talk, do you?

FANNIE R."

Sometimes people who marry young are much better judges of what is best for young people than others. Perhaps your mother saw that she was in error when she assumed the dignities of married life at so early an age and is anxious to have you avoid making the same mistake. Her advice is good advice, anyway, and we hope you will heed it. A girl of your age should not spend every evening out if she wishes to retain her beauty and good looks. Skating is good sport, but the atmosphere of the public rinks is not always desirable. There is time enough in the future for you to go out with men, and a little more time spent at home will be a benefit to you.

"I have read 'My Queen' from the very first number and think it the best series of stories I ever saw. I do hope that Miss Allyn and Marion will get married before long, for I know they would make lovely wives, and I would enjoy reading about them. Is Marion going to marry Archie Ray? Please let me know in the next issue.

BEATRICE C. M."

We are glad that you enjoy reading "My Queen," and think that future issues will interest you even more than those you have already read. Marion and Miss Allyn will both have chances to marry; whether they take advantage of them or not we shall see in the coming issues of "My Queen." Archie Ray is surely one of Marion's most constant lovers. Perhaps he may win her. Who knows?

"Please answer a question for me. Is love always accompanied by jealousy? I have a lover who is awfully jealous, and when I remonstrate with him he says that if he were not jealous he would not love me so truly. I can't understand it myself. Is it a proof of a man's affection when he almost has fits when he sees me talking to another man?

FLORRIE R. W."

Your lover probably realized that his actions required some excuse, so he invented that one. The best love is far beyond jealousy, which is an unreasoning, selfish sentiment. The man who loves best, will desire the best there is in life for the one he loves. He will be glad to see you enjoying a conversation with another because it gives you pleasure. True affection is accompanied by generosity, by sympathy, by charity, by self-denial. Jealousy is not on good terms with any of these attributes.

A man who will "have fits" at a social conversation will probably act the same uncomfortable way without any reason whatever, and we would advise you to insist upon a complete reformation of your lover's character in this respect before you think of marriage.

"I am very much interested in the letters in 'My Queen,' as a dozen or more of them have hit my case exactly. I've got all the troubles that your correspondents write about, and a few dozen others, do you suppose you can help me? To try and make it easy for you, I will say that I am awfully in love and the girl won't look at me. I'm the laughing-stock of the town just because of my affection. Do give me some advice, straight out from the shoulder! Am I a fool or an ass, or just a commonplace idiot? BILL T."

You are a very honest, plain-spoken fellow, Bill, and we like your letter immensely. It is the misfortune of most genuine lovers to betray their passions, but we see no reason why you should be a "laughing-stock" because of it. But always remember, Bill, that you owe something to your own manhood. Don't let any one, man or woman, make a fool of you or place you in a false position among your fellows. If you can not get over your unfortunate affection for this girl do not give up trying to hide it. Assume an indifference which you do not feel and recover your dignity as soon as possible. There are other girls! Bottle up your affection and wait a while.

"I am in love with a married man, and my love is returned. He is sick in bed and I have not seen him for two weeks. I know he is longing for me as much as I long to see him. His wife does not know of our affection—in fact, he has fulfilled his duty to her in every respect. I cannot bear not seeing him, and would like to know whether I could not call at the house and ask them to let me see him. What would you advise.
"SINCERITY."

You are certainly in a most unhappy position, and we can feel for you deeply. One who loves is more anxious to be with the object of their affection when sickness or misfortune reaches them than at any other time, but have you considered whether it is right for you to love this man and whether or not you are acting the part of a self-respecting woman to be so solicitous of his welfare? You have no claim upon this man at the present condition of affairs, and, probably, if you should call at the house, it would only make his wife suspicious.

We do not blame you for feeling a passion like this, but we do blame you for cultivating and nursing it when you should be trying to stifle it.

No doubt this man appreciates fully your feelings during his sickness, so it is quite unnecessary for you to demonstrate them further. The spectacle of a married man's sweetheart entering his wife's home to condole with him while he is ill in bed is one that passes our wildest imagination. What do you suppose a girl like Marion Marlowe would do if she were placed in your position?

"I am very nervous indeed about writing this letter as I can't help thinking it sounds a little silly. I am fourteen years old and a very pretty girl, if I do say so. I am in love and my young man calls me his angel. He is in the high school, and he loves me and we want to get married. Would you advise me to run away with him some night and then come back and get my father's blessing? I wouldn't dare to tell him I was in love for fear he would lock me in my room. Do tell me what to do! I simply must marry my lover! IDA."

My dear Ida, if I knew who your father was, I should be strongly tempted to send him your letter. You have evidently been reading some silly stories and have got your little head crammed full of nonsense. A girl of fourteen should be studying her lessons and not thinking of running away with some youngster who is probably quite as silly as she is. I should like very much to sit down and have a talk with you, Ida, for, if ever a girl needed a sensible talking to, you do. Now, please do Grace Shirley a favor—let the boys alone! Attend to your lessons and mind your mother and father. If you do not do this you will never be a good, sensible, intelligent woman.

"You answer so many questions from young women that perhaps you won't object to answering one from a man just by way of variety. I have been a reader of 'My Queen' from the first issue and have enjoyed it thoroughly. I only wish that I could meet a girl like Marion or Alma Allyn, but I guess that all the girls like them were married long ago. Is it true that all the girls that are pretty and witty make poor wives? Are the unattractive ones the only ones that a man will find satisfactory? I ask these two questions because I see many of my married friends really unhappy, and I don't want to take any such step myself unless I am reasonably sure of the result. EDWARD W. B."

We are much pleased to answer your questions, and think that one answer will do for both. There are many women in the world who are beautiful, both in face and character. There is no clearly defined rule regulating this matter.

You seem to be a very cautious young man, and we are glad to see it in you. You cannot be too particular in choosing a wife, neither can a girl be too particular in choosing a husband. We hope that you are deserving of the best wife in the world, but, sometimes, young men do not think about themselves. They expect all the virtues and graces to reside in the other half of the family.

"There is a young man who boards with us that I think a great deal of—in fact, we are sweethearts in a way. I enjoy talking to him more when we are alone than when others are around, and several times we two have gone into his room to talk during the evening. My mother objects to this, and says it is improper for a girl of my age—seventeen—to spend the evening in a man's room. Please let me know what you think about it. SUSIE D. R."

We presume that there is a good reason for your mother's opinion. She knows the circumstances much better than we do. If some of your friends called and you were found to be in this young man's room it might reflect upon you in their opinion. Even if there is in reality nothing improper in your actions, it is well to avoid even the appearance of evil.

You are too young to give up your entire time to one man or individual. It would be wiser for you to remain with him in the room with the rest of the family, and make the most of the general conversation. Very young people frequently make the mistake of being too anxious to isolate themselves. If you expect to be this fellow's sweetheart and want to retain his interest in you, you will not let him see too much of you.

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238 William Street, New York City.

CONFIDE IN A WOMAN

When it is evident that women need competent advice about their health, is it not well for them to know how to secure it? Tell your story without reservation to Mrs. Pinkham; she never breaks confidence, and her advice is the best in the world. Miss Mecum's two letters show how helpful it is.

[PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION.]

LIMA, IND., Jan. 8, 1898.

DEAR MRS. PINKHAM: I have read so much about your great kindness to suffering women that I thought I would write and tell you of my troubles. In the first place, I have a blood disease which the doctors call dry eczema. I have taken a great deal of medicine but received no permanent benefit, so thought I would try your medicine. Menses are irregular, and I am troubled with leucorrhœa. Bowels are constipated; sometimes have sharp pains; cannot sleep at night; have such shaking spells I cannot be still. Suffer with pain in lower part of back, in my side under left breast, and through my chest; also troubled with shortness of breath and dizziness. Please give me your advice.

MISS MARY MECUM.

LIMA, IND., July 5, 1899.

DEAR MRS. PINKHAM: When I wrote to you some time ago I was feeling very miserable. I followed the advice you gave me, and must say that I think your remedies are the greatest remedies on earth. I took both **Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound** and Blood Purifier, and they have done me more good than anything I ever took. I cannot express my thankfulness to you, and I shall always recommend your medicine to others.

MISS MARY MECUM.

Mrs. Pinkham's address is Lynn, Mass. She advises women free. Miss Della M. Hittle has given permission to print her two letters, showing how easy it is to get the right help.

MILTON, IND., March 3, 1899.

DEAR MRS. PINKHAM: I have noticed your advertisement and feel that your medicine will do me some good. I have been suffering several months with womb trouble. The womb swells and it feels as if something was gathering on each side. Some days I can hardly be on my feet at all. It makes me very nervous, and I also have a discharge of leucorrhœa. I am getting tired of suffering so much and want to try your medicine. Please advise me and answer as soon as possible.

MISS DELLA M. HITTLE.

MILTON, IND., Nov. 8, 1899.

DEAR MRS. PINKHAM: Words cannot express my gratitude for the good I have derived from the use of your remedies. I suffered with congestion of the ovaries and inflammation of the womb. I was completely run down and my condition was very serious. After reading of the good your medicine had done for others I concluded to write to you for advice. Upon receiving your reply I took a course of your medicine and am now well. The **Lydia E. Pinkham Vegetable Compound** also cured me of the awful headaches I was subject to. I shall never be without your medicine. I cheerfully recommend it to all and firmly believe it capable of curing any female sickness.

MISS DELLA M. HITTLE.

When you go to your druggist for Mrs. Pinkham's remedies do not let him persuade you to try something "just as good." He is merely trying to make a larger profit. The medicine that surely cures women is LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND.

$5000 REWARD Owing to the fact that some skeptical people have from time to time questioned the genuineness of the testimonial letters we are constantly publishing, we have deposited with the National City Bank of Lynn, Mass., $5,000, which will be paid to any person who will show that the above testimonials are not genuine, or were published before obtaining the writers' special permission.

LYDIA E. PINKHAM MEDICINE CO.